

# THE BACK-GROUND OF ASSAMESE CULTURE.

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To  
The Revered Memory  
of  
My Beloved Parents.

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trend of the gossip to the subject matter of the projected book and help me with suggestions and fill me with inspiration.

To both these friends, I am grateful, now that the book is ready, thought at the time, I sincerely disliked them for leading me to a task that appeared like a heavy burden on the already heavy load of war-time official duties, I am indebted to Dr. Kali Das Nag, Dr. Nihar Ranjan Roy and late Dr. B. M. Barua of the Calcutta University whom I had to consult occasionally on various important points, they helped me ungrudgingly with notes and references and suggestions.

I am grateful to Principal S. M. Chakravarty M. A., (Sylhet) who was my Professor of English in my college days, for kindly going through the Manuscript and correcting the language in places. I have deliberately omitted referencing the book, but for those who may feel interested, I have appended a Bibliography.

The difficulties of the press and the paper and of Picture Blocks—specially in Assam, now-a days are well-known to every body; and after undergoing various inevitable ordeals for about three years, amounting to the strain of patience almost to the yielding point, the Book has at last come out in its present shape. I am after all, grateful to the proprietors of the Ananda Printing & Publishing house, Sylhet and of the Art Press, Calcutta,

Shillong

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R M Nath

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# ERRATA

Page	Line	Incorrect	Correct
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6	3	ceremoney	ceremony
24	28	precidency	presidency
50	28	senventh	seventh
60	13	heaving	having
69	25	ebucation	education
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127	12	from	form
130	21	servered	severed
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142	8	KANIOROPUM	KANI OR OPIUM
143	36	desing	design
146	20	Tatricism	Tantricism
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# Chapter I.

## THE AUSTRICS.

The first race of people with a more or less organised form of society, in the sense in which the term is understood now, to inhabit the province now known as Assam, were the Austro-Asiatics or the Austrics, as the Anthropologist calls them.

Austro-Asiatic is only a generic term. The race of people who came to Assam belonged to the same stock that inhabited the vast country comprising the present Indonesian Islands and Australia. Linguistically and culturally, they also belonged to the same stock.

According to the French scholar Przyluski, the Austrics were yellowish brown in colour and poetic, imaginative and lustful in habit. They used to live in batches under the leadership of a headman, and they knew the art of cultivating paddy, arum roots, turmeric, betel-nuts and betel-leaves by picking up high land. They used red pigments.

The original home of the Austrics is roughly taken by some scholars to be somewhere near about northern Indo-China, others locate it in Siberia and prefer to call them Finno-Augrians.

These people were divided into several tribes—Khoso, Synteng, Kol, Ho, Gond, Moria, Munda etc. and each tribe designated itself by a term which meant 'man'—Hor, Hora, Mi, Mei etc.

According to the author of the "Periplus of the Erythraean Sea"—a Greek navigator of about the first century—A. D.—a race of people, called the Besatis, lived in the country in the interior part of the mainland to the north of Sumatra and the country was called the land of THIS. The people were of mild temperament and with flat nose and round face.

The land called This has been identified by scholars to be the "great western state of China—Ts'in, city called Thinae (Hien-yang later known as Sig-nan-fu on the Wei-river not far above its confluence with the Hoang-Ho) in the present province of Shen-si."

China was known in old days by a general term 'Chao-Thieus'—

meaning God's Heaven-land, and even to this day, the people of northern Burma designate China by the general term **Zuh-This** 'Thieus'. Chao-Thieus was later on shortend to Chuh-This, and was also pronounced as Zuh-This. Chao, Chuh or Zuh later on meant only high hill or high land. Cultivation carried on by picking up a high hill or high land was known as Zuh-moh or Zuhm cultivation. The people living in hills were known by the general term Mei-Zuh or Mi-Zuh, others were known as Mer-this.

Taing, Tien or Ti means state, dominion or kingdom, and the people were also known after the name of the state. **Besati** or **Jaintia** **Khasia** Besati was the name of a state in China or Chu-This, and the people of that state were called the Besatis. In a much later period, the people from the Kham-ti (Kham-Gold) were known as the Khamtis. Similarly the people of the Ts'in taing were known as the Ts'in-taing, Synteng, or Syntien. Syntien was later on pronounced as Chyntien and then as Zyntien, and now they are known, as the Jaintias.

'Kha' means water course in a river or a lake or a spring, and Chal (Bodo) means persons or children. **Chai** (chinese) also means blood, and chai-kha or Kha-chai means bloody water. The people living by the side of the spring from which reddish water oozed out were the Kha-chais, and they were later on known as the Khasias or the Khasis.

The Moria sect of the Austrics who were originally known as the **Mei-Morias** settled in the north eastern part of the country which was later on known as the head or the **Merans** Mahtak or Matak country. Later on, they mixed up with the Bodos and other tribes and were known as the Morans, while their tribe name was transformed from Mei-Moria to Maya-Moria or Moa-Moria. They were completely Hinduised in later times and they played an important role in overthrowing the powerful Ahom Empire. Some scholars have endeavoured to interpret Maya or Moa with reference to black-art.

A batch of the Zuh-This people from their original home-land in the land of This migrated south-west wards along the course of the **Lohit River.** river that rising from the hill on the south-western border of China joined the Tsangpo river at the north-eastern corner of Assam. As they proceeded, they found the water course in the river very wide, and they called it Lao-tu



(wide-water), and this name later on under-went transformation into Lohit. The main river flowing through Assam was known all along as the Lohit and the country was known as Lauhitya in all old Indian records. This migration very probably took place in about 2750 B. C.

These immigrants coming from Zhu-This land were known in this country as the Zuh-This people. They lived for several centuries in the land now known as the Brahmaputra Valley, where the country inundated by the water of the big river was found very fertile for paddy. The Tsang-po river originating from the Manas lake and flowing east-wards joined the Lohit river and the combined water course coming down to the plains, in later times, was given the name Brahmaputra.

Coming from China, the first homeland of paddy, the Zuh-This people introduced the cultivation of paddy for the first time in this eastern part of India. They however, continued the practice of cultivating arum-roots, turmeric etc. by picking up the high land with a pointed iron implement like a hoe called the 'Moh-khew', and this kind of cultivation was known as the Zuh-Moh or the Zuhm cultivation. The rice beer which these people used as an invigorating drink was also known as the 'Zuh' meaning the heavenly drink.

Though these people took to cultivation, they still considered the vocation to be of secondary importance for the maintenance of their lives, and the work was left to the womenfolk of the family, while the males ran after wild animals for gathering flesh for food. From this practice, either by choice or by compulsion, the belief gained ground that the womenfolk were the best suited for cultivation. Women produced children out of their wombs, vegetation also grew out of the earth. The fecundity of women was same as that of the earth. When cultivation assumed an important part in family life, the womenfolk for their supposed relationship with the earth were considered important persons for the society and they were held in high esteem. The matriarchal rules, in the matter of inheritance and other affairs, thus grew up in the society.

Earth was likened to a woman, she was the Mother Earth, and the country was also a woman—the Mother. Now, Assam as her physical geography stood in those days, and as it stands even now, extended from the high hills on the north-east frontier towards the south-west with the mighty Brahmaputra river as her back-

bone She being a woman, the north eastern portion from Sadiya upto the Bharali river in the present Darrang district was her crown— (or *Sumriti*) This portion was known in later times as Saumar. The Dibrugarh and Sadiya area together were known in later times as the Mastak or Mahtak (meaning the head) country.

The area between the Bharali river and the Rupashi river, in the present Nowgong district, formed the neck and the breast of the country, and this was known as the Ratna-pitha, or the ornamented area

The Gauhati area up to the Monas river formed the waist or the portion of the genital organ (*Kama*), and was known as the Kama-pitha. From a natural spring flowing out of a rocky hill on the bank of the Brahmaputra river oozed out reddish water due probably to the fact that the rock contained red-haematite. The people living near about this area were known by the general term Kha-chals or the Khasias or the Khasis

The water of this spring assumed a reddish tinge only during the rainy season when the flow increased naturally, and in other parts of the year the colour was natural. At the point at which the water oozed out from the rock at its foot, there was a natural fissure conical in shape about nine inches in length and fifteen inches in width and reddish pink in colour—looking very much like the genital organ of a woman. This further strengthened the belief that Mother Earth menstruated through this fissure at the pick time of cultivation. The place was therefore, called the Ka-Mei-Kha (mother-water course). Later on, the Hindus named the place Kamakhya and worshipped it as the genital organ of the Supreme Mother. (Kha as verb means to give birth to).

The lower portion of the country represented the feet of the Mother, and was later on named the Bhadra-Pitha or the Venerated region.

The Zuh-This people, as they flourished and increased in number, migrated west-wards along the belt at the foot of the Himalayas and reached as far as Afganistan and probably to the further west. They were centralised in three important centres—in the east in Assam, in the centre in the present Bareilly district, and in the north in Afganistan. These three centres were later on named as the Prag-Zuhthis, the Madhya Zuhthis and the Uttar-Zuhthis. The word Zuh-this was transformed later on into the

Sanskritic form Jyotish, which word literally means astronomy, and has been responsible for a lot of speculations amongst scholars as to the adeptness of the people of that ancient period in that particular branch of science.

The cultivation season in Assam started in those days, as it does even now—just when the monsoon broke usually in the middle of May.

**Cultivation.** So, as soon as the spring was over, the thought of the people turned to cultivation. It was necessary therefore, to do something to rouse the propensity for fertilisation in Mother Earth, so that she might be capable of conceiving and producing abundantly. This was done logically in a simple way by rousing the feeling of excitement in the womenfolk,—for, they possessed the same physio-logical properties as mother Earth.

In the month of April (Bohag or Baisakh of the Assamese) males and females, married and unmarried—mostly the latter—dressed in their best, congregated in a festive mood in the open field, and indulged in amorous songs and sex-appealing dances. The dress of the girls consisted of cloth with red border and red florets, and the palms and the feet were anointed with the red pigment made out of myrtle leaves.

The songs were composed extempore, referring to natural environments and day-to-day life and appealing to the softer feelings. These were mostly simple love appeals—often times verging on what may be considered as obscene by modern people.

The dances were nothing but imitations of the effects of nature in the environment in the preceding and the following months.

**Bohag-Bihu Dances.** Swaying of the upper part of the body backward and forward with a sudden jerk, keeping the lower part stiff, was an imitation of the effect of the storm on trees. The bending of the upper part of the body back-ward and forward was the effect of the high wind on bamboos and paddy plants. Sitting down suddenly represented the breaking of trees. Shrieks represented the rustling sound of the storm. The movement of the hip with a sudden jerk represented the waving of the palms, cocoanuts or betel-nuts on the trees by the wind, and the gentle fluttering of the stretched-out hands represented the ripples caused in the water of the great river.

After Mother Earth had been excited to full youth, the flowers

of the Asoka-plant which was tonic for the uterus were applied to her by floating them in her spinal chord—the Lohit river. **Asokasthami.** This ceremony has been adopted by the Hindus as Asoka-asthami, but this is performed in the same old fashion only in Brahmaputra river.

Then the cultivation began, and in the month of June when the time of sowing the seed came, it was considered necessary that Mother Earth should menstruate—to develop the symptom of her capability for conception. The ceremony was observed on the Kamakhya hill at the out-let of the natural spring. **Ambu-Bechi or A-Mati.** The mother was in her course and it was absolutely necessary to leave her undisturbed for four days. Ploughing or picking the earth was strictly forbidden during these four days. The womenfolk who were incapacitated for conception due to widowhood or otherwise, were prescribed food that would keep their feelings suppressed.

Virgins dressed in their best performed a dance at a very slow pace. It was unnatural that there should be any sharp movements on the fifth day of the course. The virgins put on a red pigment on their fore-heads—as a symbol of having had attained puberty—and the joy was expressed by the slow pace dance. **Nongkrem-Dance.** The ceremony is preserved in the Nongkrem dance of the Khasis. The modern artist ridicules the dance as an art-less ant-killing perambulation, but the fundamental idea at the root of the ceremony could not prescribe otherwise.

The seed had been sown, Mother Earth had conceived, and it was considered in the fourth or the fifth month of her pregnancy when the ears were full of corn to do something to keep her in the best of her health and spirits and avert any calamity to the foetus. A small plantain tree was dressed in the simple cloth veiled like a bashful woman, and in the middle part representing her belly were tied paddy plants, black arum, giant arum, turmeric plants, the chief products of cultivation, which were growing in the womb of Mother Earth. As medicinal doses were tied Bael fruits as an antidote to constipation, leaves of Asoka as an antidote to uterine troubles, Aparajita creeper as an antidote to phlegm, Barelá and Jayanti plants as antidotes to troubles in the pelvis. Then festivities with songs, dances and eating and drinking continued for four to seven days. On the last day of the ceremony filthy and obscene

language was freely used amongst the partakers in the ceremony with a view to frightening away the calamity that might harm the foetus.

The ceremony in a modified form is now observed by the Nagas as their great festival for seven days. Singing, dancing and feasting form the main features. The Hindus have now adopted the ceremony in a different manner in the great festival—the Durga Puja. The *Kola-Bou*, the technically chief deity of the festival is made even now-a-days in the old form of the Austrics, and Durga the main deity of the show is only an emblem of killing the calamitous demons with ten weapons. The use of obscene language is avoided now-a-days.

The Assamese people observe the ceremony on the last day of the month of Asvin by illuminating their houses.

The mother conceived, the child grew, and when the harvesting was over—she was delivered of the child. The people of the house bathed in the early morning. The mother had to be kept warm, and for this purpose, *Mejus* or *Bhelaghars* built with heaps of stubbles in different parts of the field were set fire to. Cakes and drinks made out of the fruits of cultivation were exchanged and eaten together in a great festivity. This ceremony is now observed on the last day of the month of Pous and is also called the *Pous-Parvan* or the *Pitha (Cake) parvan*.

All these cultivation ceremonies of the Austrics are observed even now all over the Assam Valley—in the plains as well as in the hills. The Hindus in the plains observe these festivals on the last day of the month—previous to the month after which the festival is named, but the hill-people observe the festivals on any date or dates fixed by the head-man of a particular locality during the season.

All these festivals except the menstruation festival are now known as the Bihu festivals. *Bohag Bihu* is observed on the last day of the previous month, *Chaitra*; *Kati Bihu* on the last day of *Asvin*, and *Magh Bihu* on the last day of *Pous*. The term *Bihu* is derived from the Sanskrit word "*Dvishu*" meaning dividing into two, which referred to the date of the solar equinox, when, the day and the night were of equal duration. The Aryan year commenced from the '*Dvishu*' day, and the last day of the previous month being the new year's eve was a day of rejoicing and festivity.

Different schools of thought counted the month with regard either to the movement of the sun or of the moon, and the year commenced

on the date either on the vernal or the autumnal equinox. With the precession of the equinox, the first month of the year also changed from time to time, but the tradition of the observance of the festival of new year's eve in any particular month continued even when that month ceased to be the last month of the year.

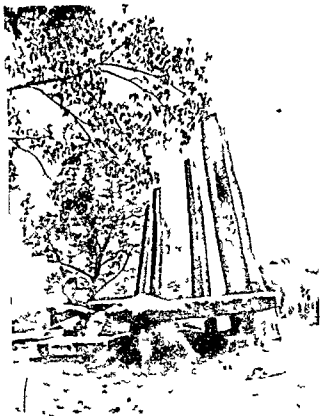
According to astronomical calculations, Aগ্রহায়ণ (Nov.-Dec.) was the first month of the year in about 4000 B.C., Kartik in about 2200 B.C. and Asvin in about 1400 B.C. The last days of all the corresponding previous months were at one time or other the days of the new year's eve.

When the Aryan civilisation spread into Assam, the Dvishu ceremonies were found to coincide more or less with the cultivation festivals of the indigenous people, and with fusion of culture the festivals were merged. The tradition of the observance of the last day of Asvin by the Assamese people as a Dvishu day (Kati-Bihu) entitles them to the tradition of the Aryan culture of about 2200 B. C., when perhaps the first wave of Aryan culture spread into Assam.

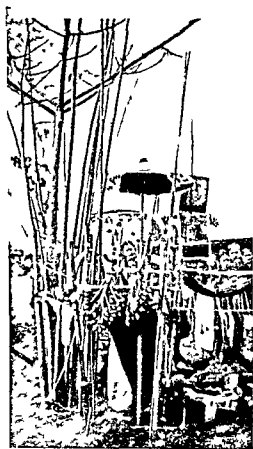
The Austrics believed in the immortality of the soul or the spirit. When a person died, his or her spirit was believed to take shelter in a rock or a tree, and the relatives of the deceased erected a piece of stone at a convenient place to provide an easy resort for his or her spirit. Food and drink were offered on another flat piece placed in front of the vertical one.

The Khasis and the Jaintas erect numbers of such stone megaliths—even now a-days in memory of their deceased. The Khasis call them Maw-Bynna (Maw—stone; Bynna—to let people know, to commemorate). These megaliths consist of a vertical piece of stone fixed into the ground with a flat squared piece placed on four stone pegs in front of the vertical one. At the time of the erection ceremony, the vertical piece is decorated with the dress of the deceased according to his or her sex, and the food and the drink meant for the spirit of the deceased are heaped on the flat piece. The Garos erect only a vertical piece made usually with timber, and this piece is oftentimes carved with the face and dressed with the clothings of the deceased.

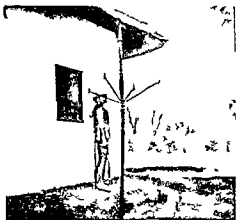
Dr. Hutton considered these megaliths as representations of phallic worship—the vertical piece representing the male, and the flat piece representing the female. But the actual ceremony of erection does not support this interpretation. Vertical ones are erected to represent either a male or a female, and the flat piece is only a plate for the food-



The Austric Megalith raised in honour of the Dead  
Jantapur



Installation ceremony of the Megalith as observed by the M'ks in the M'kr Hills



stuffs, Pedestrians revere the vertical piece but do not hesitate to squat on the flat piece

The Mikirs who were influenced by the Khasi culture perform the death ceremony of their deceased by performing the Chuman Kang Dance—(Ka ɾɔng—Dance) literally meaning the dance of the heavenly people—the Khasis. Unmarried boys and girls of marriageable age go round in a circle at a slow pace, each one holding the waist of the other. The girls are veiled. Most obscene songs appealing to sex and sex intercourse are sung by dancers and the audience—while beating of drums continues in a corner of the gathering. Wailings go on near the megaliths erected in memory of the deceased in honour of whom the ceremony is performed on one side, and the sex appealing songs and the dances by virgins and unmarried youths go on simultaneously on the other side.

This ceremony is evidently purely Austric, and the dance and the songs are only devices to rouse the propensity for making good the loss sustained by the community by the death which is mourned on the other side.

The belief that women were specially related to Earth further strengthened the belief that they were special favourites of God. In religious ceremonies women took the active part in officiating as a go-between between men and God. At the time of draught the dancing of a naked woman and at the time of pestilence in crops the tour of a naked woman round the area were considered enough to please the angry god and bring relief. The spirit of God found abode in women to foretell events. This Austric belief has been assimilated in various Hindu customs. *Dee dhan* or *Deva dhan* literally meaning God's women is still common in Assam to officiate as God's vehicle to foretell events. The *Deva dasi* system of dedicating women to the god of a temple appears to be a direct influence of the Austric culture.

In the matter of administration and inheritance, the women got preference. The man went to the family of the woman he married and the youngest daughter of the family inherited the property.

The Austrics like the Polynesians made drums by scooping out hollow the trunk of a tree and covering its sides with skins of animals. The *dhol* scooped out of a tree trunk is yet the important musical instrument in Assam specially in Bihu festivals.



Canoes were also made out of a long tree by scooping out its heart wood. These boats are still a speciality in Assam.

Houses were built with bamboos and thatch or leaves on a raised pedestal made with trees. The buildings had two sloped roofs, and the end formed the frontage. All the members of the family lived in the same room. Little boys and girls, when they were grown up a bit were compelled to sleep in separate dormitories built separately for each sex in every village. This system is still in vogue amongst hill tribes in Assam.

China having had developed hunting, fishing, animal husbandry, growth of clans and the marriage system in about 2800 B. C. and the use of the plough, and medicinal plants in about 2700 B. C. the Zhu. This people who came to Assam introduced the Moh-Khiew or the pointed hoe for Zuhm cultivation and also introduced the cultivation of paddy in Assam. Apart from the few iron implements, they also used stone implements of the neolithic period and such implements are found in the hills of Assam. The use of a few medicinal plants was also known to these people.

These people did not know the use of cows or buffaloes either for cultivation or for milk and as a matter of fact, no hill tribe in Assam use them even now for these purposes. Bison and the Methon were hunted and goats and pigs were tamed for flesh. The elephant appears to have been unknown to these people, for there is no word for elephant in the Khasi language, the word 'Hati' has been adopted later on.

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## Chapter II.

### THE NEGROIDS

The next race of people who influenced the culture of India were the Negroids who migrated from the South and the South West; but their progress into the northern and the eastern zones of India was stemmed by the Austriacs who fought them successfully. Thus hampered in northern move, the Negroids had to confine themselves to the southern parts of India from where they made an easterly move and

reached the Indonesian islands where they mixed freely with the Austriacs in that area. The people of the mixed blood then moved westwards and entered Assam where, however, they were confined to the hills on the eastern border of the country. These were the 'Nang-gas' or the people coming from heaven, and are now known as the Nagas who as a memento of their old habitation on sea-shores still prize conch-shells and cowries as valuable decoration for their persons.

They have adopted the Zuhm and the terraced cultivation and retained the various cultivation-festivals along with the installation of stone monoliths in modified forms. The Negro spears are their weapons, the Austric drums are their instruments of music and war and the Austric rice-beer (Zuh) is their national tonic drink.

The Nagas believe that they are born of stone; and many sects reverentially point out to stones in certain caves near their villages as their original progenitors and preceptors. A big rock with a cavity—the sign of female generative organ, and a mace-like stone block—the emblem of male organ near by with a lot of small boulders near them, are supposed to be the original parents of the Nagas.

The vertical stone monolith set up by the Nagas—as the Gena stone—appears to be an emblem of their original fore father; and such cultural traits and survivals may be compared with the stone cult among the people of Indonesia (Sumatra, Phillipine) Malanesia and Polynesia (Hawaii-Maori).

The Nagas must have migrated to Assam at different times starting from a period about two thousand years before the Christian era, but what relation they or any of their tribes had with the rulers of the plains area of the province in different ages is not clear. It appears however, that none of the kings of Kamarupa did ever climb the Hills on the eastern border to subdue the various tribes of Nagas as no trait of Kamarupi culture of any of the dynasties from the Asuras to the Palas is traceable in the whole Hill.

The various tribes of Nagas each speaking a language of its own had their own system of government. Each village or a group of villages had a chief and each village was again divided into several 'Khels' with a headman over each khel. There was no such thing as paramount power, but each tribe or each chief

was always anxious to prove his worth more over the neighbours by constant feuds and head huntings.

Some of the chiefs living close to the civilised countries in the plain came in contact with the rulers of those countries in connection with trade and Manipur to the South and Kamarupa to the west did certainly influence the Nagas to a certain extent in the matter of trade industries art and warfare. A certain Ahom King of Assam banished his faithless pregnant wife to the house of a Naga Chief, and the child born of this queen was taken back to the Ahom court as a high official. Another Ahom King Cadadhar Singha found a safe shelter in the house of a Naga Chief during the period of his political incarceration. Similarly, the most powerful King of Manipur—Garib Newaz had the tradition of Naga lineage.

The word Naga—appears to have been derived from archaic Manipuri—*Nang ga* meaning coming from heaven (*Nang-da* going to heaven)

**Art & Craft** None of the Nagas except a few tribes living far into the interior are naked, as a matter of fact, they are expert in weaving their own clothes—dyed in different brilliant colours. The spears and the *daos*—are well built with properly tempered steel and their handles are artistically decorated with fast coloured hair. Even the bamboo beer bottle and the wooden belt for holding the *dao* are artistically painted. Cowries are used for decorating clothes and head-gears. The Angami Nagas are good artists in ivory works. Crude art in timber decorates buildings and village gates. Massive stone work in buildings is a speciality of the Nagas. The Nagas used a kind of iron coin—called Jabilee—in arrow shaped strips.

With the fall of the Kachari King who had his capital at Dimapur in 1530 A.D., the Angami Nagas who lived in the Kohima area became **Angami** very powerful, and under the leadership of the chiefs of **Supremacy** Khenomah and Mozomah they infiltrated into the plains of Sibsagar and Nowgong and incarcerated all other neighbouring tribes to gain suzerainty over them. The Angami Chief again vied with the Mozomah Chief in this bid for power.

The British came in conflict with the Nagas in 1831, when a party of officials started from Manipur for reconnoitering a road from Imphal **Under Manipur** to Sibsagar. The party was badly opposed and in retaliation, Gambhir Singh, the king of Manipur, led a huge army against the Nagas, subdued them all and annexed the whole

Naga Hill area to his Kingdom in 1833. But after Gambhir Singh's death in 1835, the Nagas again became turbulent and carried on depredations in Sibsagar and Nowgong districts.

Various expeditions were sent by the British officer stationed in Nowgong against the Nagas through Haslong, the Nowgong-Doboka

**The British.** Mohongdijua Dimapur and the Golaghat Dimapur tracks in 18<sup>th</sup> 1839 and 1840 respectively, with no appreciable results. In the meantime the Chiefs of Knonomah and Mezomah started fighting among themselves—the former with the help of the Manipuri and the latter with the help of the Kachari mercenaries. These feuds were put an end to in 1849 when Lt. Vincent led a successful expedition against the Nagas and brought the Hill area under the control of the British.

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## Chapter III.

### THE KIRATAS

All the ancient records mention a race of people called the Kiratas living on the Himalayan borders and also in Assam. The Vajrasenaya **Epics** Samhita and the Atharva Veda describe the Kiratas as the people residing in caves. The Great Epic Mahabharata mentions several principalities all along the border land of the Himalayas ruled by Kirata Kings with whom the ruler of Delhi had to come into conflict. The Kalika Purana describes the Kiratas—as having short stature, golden colour, shaven head, rough skin and addicted to meat and drink. According to this authority, the present Assam area was ruled over by Ghotoka—a Kirata Chief when Narakasura invaded the country in about 2200 BC. According to Mahabharata Bhagadatta of Pragjyotisha joined the battle of Kurukshetra with a strong army of Kirata and Chinese soldiers.

The author of the Periplus makes no mention of the present Assam **Periplus** area in particular but before reaching the Gangetic delta, the Greek navigator met with flat nosed Kirrhadaes and other tribal races.

The Nagarjuni Kugda inscription—dated 1st 2nd century A. D., Nagarjuni found on the south bank of the Kistna river in the Kunda Deccan, mentions a great Buddhist religious institution dedicated to the Buddhist teachers of the Theraveda (orthodox) sect who were described as gladdeners (converters) of the countries—Kashmir, Gandhar (Afghanistan), Cina, Cilata, Tosali, Avaramta Vamga, Vanavasi, Yavana, etc

The Greek writer Nonnos (5th Century A D) describes Thyamis and Olkaros—two sons of the expert navigator Itharseros of the Cirradion race Pliny makes mention of the Scyrites or Syrites  
**Greek Writers** tribe

All these terms—Syrites, Cirradion, Kirrhades, Cilata—refer to the same people who are described as Kirata in Indian records The Kiratas had a great influence over ancient Assam

Who were these Kiratas ? The word Silk is derived from the original Mongolian—Sirkek, Korean Sir Chinese Ssi, Greek Ser, Latin Sericum.  
**Silk Trader.**

The word "Sari", wearing cloth of Indian ladies, is derived from Ser The dealer in Silk was called the Seres or the Scyrites The word Scyritae Kirrhadae and Kirata appears to have had originally referred to dealers in Silk

Silk was originally produced in China and it was catered by merchants of Turkestan through Tibetan intermediaries to India and Assam.

That there was an ancient route from China along the course of the Lokit river to Assam has already been mentioned The Zuh-This people-  
**Trade Routes** came to Assam Valley by this route The Chinese records of about 248 A.D mentions a trade route from Yunan in South China through Snan states, Hukong Valley, the Brahmaputra river, and Kamarupa to Pataliputra (Patna) and Sravasti Other routes were from Sigcanfu to Lanchowfu, then to Siningfu, thence to Kokonor and south-west ward by Lhasa and the Chumbi Valley to Sikkim and the Ganges There were other sub routes through Nepal along the course of the Arun river, through Kailas peak along the Brahmaputra. A route from Lhasa led into Assam along the Lower Brahmaputra, and another route from near Manas Sarobar was along the course of the Subansiri river The route from Lhasa took two months to reach Chounahat on the border of Assam, and four miles from border of Assam was Geganhar The trade route with Bhutan

ard Tibet through Udalguri in the Darrang District along the course of the Dhansiri river is still in use

It is therefore, clear that in ancient times traders from different parts of Tibet, Central Asia and China flocked to Assam through various routes and as they traded mostly in Silk they were generally called Seres—Cirrhadoi (in modern sense Serek cloth walla) Syrites—Cırata—Kırata

The word Kırata therefore, is a general term referring to the people of the Mongolian origin and it refers specially to the Bodos. It is they who first introduced the cultivation of Silk of different varieties in Assam in those ancient times, and Assam has therefore been famous for her silk from time immemorial. It is therefore, that all the hill tribes of Assam are expert weavers of silk of some form or other, and Muga and Patsilk are an indigenous household art in Assam.

These Kıratas, when they settled in Assam took to cultivation and due to their natural propensity carried on trade with their original homeland on one side and other parts of India on the other. They made good warriors and were expert boatmen. When the Austric power was on the wane they became the rulers of Assam.

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## Chapter IV.

### THE BODOS

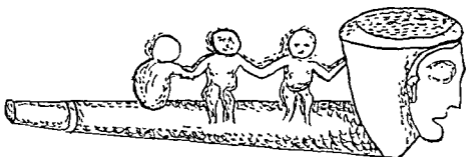
When the Austriacs were gradually weakened, either due to their conflicts with the Negroids or due to their giving way to pleasure and ease, a fresh invasion of these country started from the north along the whole northern front from across the Himalayas. The invaders were a race of people who inhabited the country north of the Himalayas and west of China. This country was known as the *Bod* or the home land synonymous with Sanskrit Varsha (as in Bharat Varsha the home land of Bharat=India). There were various parts of the country—Hor-Bod Kur-Bod etc., and in later times when Buddhism spread into that country, the southern part inhabited by Buddhist Lamas was known as Bsti (Lama) Bod which

has now been transformed into Tibbet or Tibet. To the east of the Bod country and on the Chinese border lived numerous hill tribes of which the Ch'ao were the most powerful. The corresponding Ch'ao word for Bod or homeland was Meung and the B do word la meant vast. Hence, perhaps this area was later known as Meung la or Mongla very probably when the Ch'ao became a powerful power in China. Later on, the area came to be known as Mongolia.

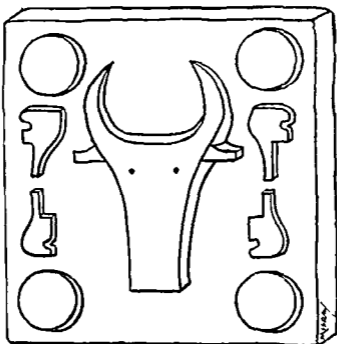
The inhabitants of various parts of the Bod country were known as Boddō Fichā or Boddō cha (Fichā cha children) or the children of the Bod country, and were later known simply as the Boddō or the Bodo. Some of them however retained the name of the particular portion of the country from which they migrated at a later date. These were the Koches who perhaps migrated from the Kuchar or the Kucha area and the Mechas who migrated from the Mecha area.

These people had the influence of the Chinese culture in the east and the Egyptian and the Babylonian culture in the west due probably to their intercourse with the people of those countries in connection with trade. In religion they were worshippers of the symbol of vegetation sprouting or growth in the form of a vertical mound of stone or mud or in the form of a twig of *Manasa'* or Sija (*Euphorbia Neripholia*) that grew naturally with all its stems sprouting vertically upwards with five ribs and five depressions. This was called *Bathou Bria'*. The root cause of sprouting was considered to be the union of two snakes just like the *Gee* and the *Era* of the Egyptians. Snake as the root cause of energy has again been the Hittite influence. In art they were experts in songs and dances and music and fond of bronze gongs, cymbals and big drums. They reared silk cocoons and spun fine yarn out of them and made lustrous cloth dyed with blue, red and yellow pigments. The Bodo word *Halalā* means lustre emitting, and the Chinese traveller to Assam in the seventh century A.D. Hsien Tsang prized very much a *Halalā* coat made with Bodo silk and presented to him by the then King of Assam.

The first batch of the Bodos who migrated to Assam came from a place situated at the confluence of two rivers—*Dila Ubra* (big water) and *Changibra* (small water) due to that area being disturbed and converted into a desert by an earthquake. This was very likely a part of the present Gobi desert lying at the confluence of the modern *Khasgar-daria* and *Yarkand-daria*.



NAGA PIPE.



Wood Carvings-Buffalo-head and Human skulls Naga Tribes, Naga-Hills.



Sijv plant and the Snake Energy worship by the Bodos



[From stone sculpture on the Na'



By batches they came and spread over the whole of Assam; sometimes ousting the Austrics and sometimes living amicably with them. They installed the phallic emblem of their worship near the **Kamarupa** Austric Kameikha. The Austrics termed this emblem by the name Umei-Ludar-Fia (U Sign of masculine gender, Mei=mother, Ludai=male genital organ, Fia-pha=god). This name underwent transformation to Umaluda-Umanuda, and is now known as Umananda, a Siva Lingam on the peacock island in the middle of the Brahmaputra opposite Gauhati, traditionally believed to be the consort of Kamakhya. The Bodos called the Austric Kameikha the genital organ of mother earth, Ka-Mei-Fria (Fria=female god). Gradually, the place containing the two important places of worship of the two great peoples of the country came to be known by the names Kamaluda, Kamaruda; Kamalupa, Kamarupa. The last name still stands, while the other names are found in various old chronicles of foreign writers.

The Bodos migrated to and settled in the vast plain area comprising of the present North Bengal, and this was probably the first area of wide **Bangla** and vast plain land that they settled in. They therefore, perhaps, called the country Ha (land) Bang (plenty) La (big, wide) meaning plenty and wide land. It is very probable that the present name of the country—Bangla (Bengal) is derived from its ancient Bodo name.

A similar name was given to the plain area in the North West part of Assam in the present North Lakhimpur district where the country was known as Ha-Bang (Ha-bung) even in the historical period. Mai-Bang (Mai=paddy) is the name given to the plain portion of the North Cachar Hills in a much later date.

come to this country previously and were driven southwards to the Barak valley in the present Cachar district

Here they ruled for several centuries over other minor Bodo groups the Haflongas, the Japlongas, the Rungrangs, the Luchi Dafas &c, and then gradually spread westwards, settling at last in the area now known as Tipperah—the name of the country being derived from the name of their race

Some groups of the Bodos who had not come down to the plains used to descend occasionally and plunder the Aryans and other peoples in the plains they were called variously as, **Hidimba** *Raskshasas* (Bandits), *Yakshas* (Hoarders synonymous with Jews) A chief of a bandit group lived about 15th century B C in the hill area north of the present United provinces, and though he was detestable, his young sister bewitched Bhima, the young prince of the Lunar dynasty then ruling at Delhi by her youth and beauty, and much against the will of her brother who was killed by her paramour, she embraced the much hated Aryan and had a son by him Party dissensions ensued, and **Hidimba** the Bodo princess who was soon forsaken by her lover, had to leave the paternal home and migrate eastwards with a band of her followers to Assam and settled in the North east frontier area Her people continued migration and development along the eastern belt of the country and ultimately had a strong centre at the foot of the Naga Hills on the bank of the big Dhansiri river—which they named *Dima* (Di water, Ma big, abundant) and called themselves *Dima cha* (children of the big river) Their city was named *Dimapur* A section of these people migrated to Bengal, as well and were ultimately either subjected by or merged in the Tipperahs or the Rungrangs The *Dimachas* settled in the area now known as the Rungpur district which they named *Di Ma-la* the country of wide and abundant water courses They were gradually ousted first by the *Tiphras* who called the country *Tista* (Ti Di water) and then by the Rungrangs who established the city named after them as Rungpur The *Dimachas* then moved further west and established a city called *Dimachapur* or *Dimachpur* which very probably later on assumed the name *Dinajpur*, after the name of the ruling King *Donuj mardar*

In the north eastern part of Assam, some of the Bodos had an admixture of blood with the *Moria* sect of the *Austrics* and from them

**Moran.** probably sprang up the Moran tribe. In north of Bihar the admixture of the Austric blood with that of the Bodos diluted further by the Aryan blood gave rise to various races and tribes like the Kolia, 'Muria, Sakya, Jhalla, Malla &c—who ruled over several kingdoms and developed a high-class mixed culture about the sixth century B. C.

When the wave of Aryan culture spread into Assam, some of the Bodos maintained aloofness whereas others had free intermixture of blood with various races that swept over the country. At last, the Bodo chiefs of independent mentality were gradually driven to the belts bordering on the hills in the East and they were generally called the Border-landers or the Kakharis or the Kacharis; and some of the Bodos in Assam are known by this term.

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## Chapter V.

### The Dravidians & The Aryans.

While the Austriacs, the Negroids and the Bodos were busy in the northern and eastern parts of India, various races of people developed new cultures in the west, centering round the banks of the Nile river in *Egypt where they first learnt the art of growing wheat. The Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Hittites* established various kingdoms, evolved various civilisations and developed various theological ideas. Various tribes or races who came in contact with them were influenced by them directly or indirectly and cultures developed again.

Cultivation of wheat, rearing of cows and horses, construction of buildings with stone and bricks were the special features of domestic life, and in the matter of religious ideas the supreme energy of God was conceived of in the various forms of (a) Vegetation sprouting—Symbolised as a vertical mound of stone; (b) Soaring up in the sky—symbolised as a bird; (c) and moving up vigorously—symbolised as a Snake. Various natural phenomena were also considered by others as representations of the supreme energy of God;—the Sun, the Moon, the Rain,

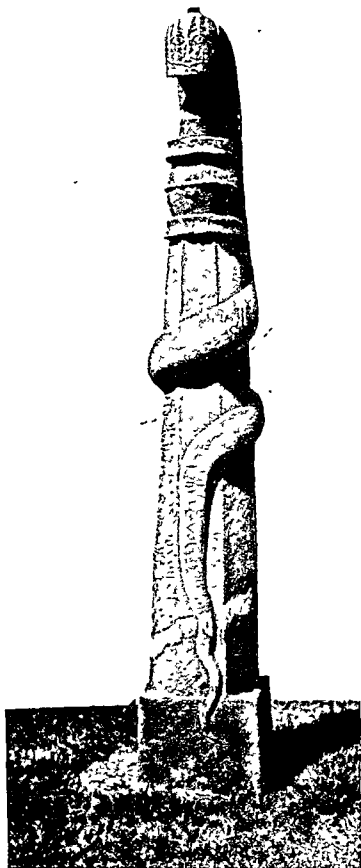
the Wind, the Thunder were also objects of veneration. The Bull was considered to be the symbol of the Sun and the Cow of the Moon, The male and the female aspects of the divine energy were also conceived of. The Hittites were the pioneers in the conception of the supreme energy in the form of a female snake 'Indara', whom they worshipped as a goddess, while another school of thought amongst them considered the same to be in the form of a male snake; and later on due to a synthesis of ideas the combination of the male and the female energies in the form of Snakes was considered to be at the root of all creations or vegetations in the world. The symbol of these two snakes embracing one another—Gee and Ira, therefore, found its place at the foot of the vertical mound—the symbol of sprouting,—and the combination is what has now developed in India as Siva-Lingam and Yonipitham.

These peoples from their various home-lands migrated southwards at different times in different batches carrying with them the various ideas of these cultures developed and intermixed from time to time.

The first batch that settled in the western part of India is now known by the general term Dravidian. They established flourishing cities in the modern Sindh areas but could not penetrate into the northern or the eastern zones held firmly by the Austriacs and the Bodos. They were worshippers of the symbol of vegetation sprouting in the form of a simple mound and also of the Sun and the Moon in the form of the Bull and the cow.

They were then followed by the followers of the Bird cult and before the new batch could settle down properly, came the third batch with highly developed heterogenous ideas of god-head in various natural phenomena and the elements, singing lyrical hymns and making offerings of ghee in fire in honour of them. They had also various groups or tribes amongst them—but the most powerful amongst them being the Arrhi group, the people were probably known by the general term Arrhias or the Aryans.

The Aryans were a well organised and powerful people and by forcefully sweeping away every obstacle before them, established a vast kingdom from Persia to the Punjab in India. Here they met with a stiff resistance from the previous occupants of the country the Dravidians in the west, the Austriacs and the Bodos in the North and the East, and the Negroids in the South. The Dravidians were termed as the Danavas, and the Daityas, the Austriacs and the Bodos as the Nisha-



Snake Pillar at Sadiya installed by the Mishmis in 1532 A. D.

das, Kiratas and Dasyus and the Negroids as the Vanaras (monkeys). They had to fight constantly with these peoples to establish their position.

Close upon the Aryans came the followers of the Snake-cult—the people who were influenced by the Hittite conception of the supreme energy of God in the form of a snake, though the majority of them transformed the female snake Indara of the Hittites to the male Snake Vasuki or Ananta.

The Aryans established diplomatic relations with the followers of the Bird-cult whom they called the Pakshis—(the Alpines of the anthropologist) who had come earlier, and the followers of this Snake-cult, whom they called the Nagas; and taking them as their allies started a vigorous offensive against their enemies. The Nagas were despatched to the front lines in the North and the West and the Birds were despatched to the East and the South-east; and they soon overcame their powerful and troublesome adversaries. The Dravidians were driven to the south and the Nishadas and the Kiratas were partly annihilated or totally subjugated or driven to the hills to the north and the east.

The Nagas were allotted kingdoms in the north and also in the southwest, and the Birds were allotted independent settlements in the east and the south-east. But the eastward move could not proceed beyond present Bihar, and Assam was therefore free from the allied invasion. Magadha, western part of Bengal and Kerala became strong holds of the Birds; United Provinces, Central provinces and a portion of the Bombay Presidency were under the Nagas.

Admixture of religious ideas and culture along with the admixture of blood began to take place. The Snake Vasuki was considered to be powerful enough to hold the earth on his hood; the Aryan male god of supreme prowess assumed the name—Indra after Indara, and the Vedic supreme god Vishnu reposed on the lap of Ananta snake and took the Bird god Garuda as his vehicle. The Dravidian emblem of phallic worship admitted the male and the female snake energies entwined round it at its feet and evolved as the Siva Lingam. But the once powerful female snake-god 'Indara'—though she admitted herself to be a daughter of Siva did not fail to show her wrath to the followers of Siva and challenge the authority of other gods—who could appease her only by flattery, and ultimately

she gained her ground as a powerful goddess—'Monosa' in a later period.

The Snakes and the Birds were both favour-seekers of the Aryans and though the latter patronised both equally, the two races were always jealous of each other and the Nagas and the Pakshi continued forever the pledged enemies of each other.

During the political troubles, some of the Dravida chiefs migrated eastwards and settled in the Assam area though their kingdoms were probably short-lived. One Maht-ranga Danava is believed to have had established a kingdom somewhere north-east of present Gauhati.

The Nagas and the Birds exercised cultural influence to a certain extent in Assam amongst the Austrics and the Bodos. The Khasis worship the male snake U-Thlen secretly with a view to gain wealth and prosperity; the Hajongs propitiate the snake to avert epidemic and calamities, and the Mishmis of the Sadiya area regarded the snake so sacred that even in the sixteenth century A. D. when the Ahom king entered into a treaty with them, they got the text of the agreement engraved on the hood of a stone snake carved round a stone pillar. A certain section of the Kacharis believe that their ancestor was born out of the grace of the Bird-god who dropped his stool on the head of a lucky virgin.

The female Snake Goddess who maintained her position was honoured by some Dravidian and Austric tribes in other parts of India for saving them from catastrophes like cholera and other epidemics and was known in later times as Mari-Devi, Mari-Amba, Mari-Bhowani, and through the agency of the Austric Morias of the United Provinces who came to Assam in the fourteenth century A. D. as followers of Muhammedan invaders, was introduced to this country as Mari Devi;—her stronghold being further strengthened by her introduction to Bengal probably by the Senas of the Carnatic as 'Monosa', being installed in the form of a stone image in the Paikor village of Rajshahi.

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# Chapter VI.

## THE ASURAS.

As stated before, the Aryans had several sects amongst them, and though normally they all offered homage to the physical phenomena and elements in the form of lyrical hymns and offerings in fire, a difference of opinion arose as to the exact theological significance. One school of thought was of the opinion that the particular elements represented formless (As-sura) energies, whereas the second school of thought considered them to be so many brilliant presiding deities (Devas); and thus, the Asura and the Deva parties sprang up. This difference of opinion took a very definite shape when the Aryans in India took over Sind and settled there. The Deva party in Sind was led by Brihaspati of the Angirasa family and the leader of the Asura party was Bhrigu of the Bhargava family.

The Asuras cut themselves off from the Devas, who were powerful in India and confined themselves in the western zone which was called Aryana and known in later times as Irana or Iran; they were termed by the people of the Deva party despicably as Asura. The Indian kingdom was termed as Aryavarta and the inhabitants in Sind who were fanatical in their Deva idea were termed by the Iranians as Sindus or Hindus and the followers of the Deva ideas were termed despicably as Dewas or ghosts.

The lyrical hymns which were originally known by the general term 'Chhanda' (poems) were considered to be the fountain-heads of inspiration and knowledge and were termed by the Devas as *Zendavesta*. the Veda, while the Asuras termed them as Zenda-Aved or Zenda-Avesta (Chhanda became Zenda). The supreme deity of the Iranians became Ahura (Asura) who was formless.

The Asuras and the Devas both belonged to the same family and they had the same culture and civilisation. They were equally strong and in some respects the Asuras were stronger. The Danavas belonged to the same stock—though they came to India earlier.

In the Puranic legends, Daksha Prajapati had thirteen daughters who were all married to the same husband Kashyapa; and their children considered the father as a non-entity in the matter of claiming lineage



and cited the names of their respective mothers testifying to the fact that the descent was entirely matrilineal. Daitya (children of Diti), Danava (children of Danu) are the synonyms for the Asuras.

When the Danavas were driven to the South, the estrangeme nt of feelings on theological principles became more acute between the Asuras and the Devas and they started quarrelling and fighting.

**Vedanta.** At the beginning, the Asuras imposed overwhelming *defeats* on several occasions on the Devas, but their power could never be crushed. At last, the Devas strengthened their position considerably by Hinduising the Nagas and the Pakshis amongst whom they propagated their vedic ideas. The Nagas practically lost their separate culture, while the Pakshis or the Alpines who held to the original idea of their main homeland, i.e. the formlessness of the supreme God, though they were influenced by the Hindu vedic culture, evolved a new idea of thought in their area in Mithila (Bihar) and preached the Vedanta. Vedanta ultimately aimed at the formlessness of the supreme power of God-head. When the Aryans in India laid stress on social reorganisation by introducing four social orders and claimed Brahmins to be the privileged preachers of religion, the Mithila school of thought discarded the idea, and the king became the head of religious preachings in that country. The Hindu sage Vasistha was insulted while he came to perform Yajna in the royal court of Mithila, and as a defiance to all social organisations of the Brahmins, king Viswamitra claimed for himself the rights and privileges of a Brahmin.

Asuras still stayed in Aryavata, and in the face of all oppositions established various centres in various parts of the country, and in Mithila they were in great numbers. In the Bombay Presidency and in the Deccan some Asuras lived in certain areas.

In India, the Asura was marked throughout by the *Assyrian Ashur's* aptitude for medicine, astrology and occult power. He preserved his sea sense; he came across the sea of salt water and Varuna had ever been his guiding star. The power and sovereignty of Varuna was Asura's by birth-right.

In the meantime, while Dasaratha became the King of Ayodhya (Oudh) the Deva ideas were firmly established and the Hindu social orders were strictly enforced in about 2200 B. C. The **Zarathustra.** Asuras in Iran who had been reduced to a weak state were reorganised by their leader Zarathustra by introducing democratic

societies called Maghas, each Magha being guided by a leader called the Maghi or Mugee Brahmin. The king of Oudh won over the King of Mithila by establishing friendly relations by marrying the latter's daughter with his son, and thus all hopes of the Asuras were frustrated even in this area.

Zarathustra used to carry a long stick with nine knots and with a small axe fixed on its top. He was therefore called the *Parasurama* axe or Parasu-holder great man, or Parasurama; and all the leaders of his group used the same emblem and were also known as Parasuramas at different times

Dasaratha's son Rama Chandra married the daughter of Siradhvaj Janaka—the King of Mithila, and this union was the cause of loss of all hold and power of Parasurama in this part of the country and the Asura cause suffered a terrible set-back—so much so that they had to lead a very poor and powerless life—their head quarters in India being shifted perhaps to the Bombay Presidency. At a much later date, one of the Parasuramas in his head quarters was incarcerated by the Hoihoya Kshatriyas but he rallied himself and dealt them successively twenty one crushing defeats till the Hoihoyas were completely disbanded.

Some of the Maghi headmen—who were the religious heads - fell far off from the original ideas of Zarathustra and under the influence of *Astrologers*, Egyptian culture took to the art of divination by studies of movements of the heavenly bodies. They started worshipping the Sun-god and offered homage to his image and evolved a new cult. They were therefore, despised by the followers of Zarathustra and were at the same time hated by the followers of the Deva-cult. They had therefore, to lead an awkward life in the society. From them arose the Sakadvipi Brahmin or the astrologer class (Daivajna or Gonak) in India. Expert in medicine, astrology and occult power, a batch of the Maghis appear to have had a stronghold in Bihar which came to be known as Magadha or Maga-land, precisely similar in significance to England, Deutsch-land &c.

Ramachandra, the king of Ayodhya—during whose time the Hindu social order was firmly established and the powers of the Asuras and of the Danavas were finally crushed either by prowess or by diplomacy is venerated by the Hindus as an incarnation of the supreme God Vishnu for his memorable work for the community.

# Chapter VII.

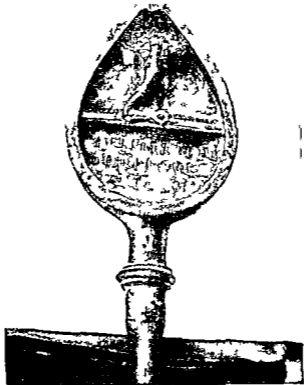
## THE NARAKA DYNASTY

Siradhwaja Janaka, the king of Mithila who by giving his daughter in marriage to Ramchandra, was in a way responsible for crushing the influence of the Asuras, brought up an orphan Asura boy in his family and gave him education along with the royal princes. This boy is said to have been left in a crematorium immediately after his birth by his parents due probably to some illicit background, and Janaka picked him up from that uncomfortable environment.

But as the boy grew up, he was found to be surpassing the royal princes in valour, intelligence and tact, and the king and the queen became perturbed lest the helpless orphan would some day oust their heir from the throne. The young man some how learnt of this suspicion hovering over the minds of his god father and god mother from the nurse who brought him up, and to free himself from this unpleasant atmosphere started off with a band of enterprising young friends and followers under the pretence of bathing in the Ganges and marching eastwards reached the bank of the Loht river (Brahmaputra).

The King of the country on the bank of the Loht was Ghotok,—  
*Invasion of Kamarupa* with Kirata subjects who were of yellowish complexion, short stature, flat nose and round face, shaven heads and fond of drink and raw meat—very likely Austrics and Bodos. The power of the king was on the wane and when he came in conflict with the batch of enterprising foreigners—he met with a crushing defeat. The king was killed, some of his subjects fled eastwards to the sea shore, while others who survived massacre submitted to the invaders. The young Asura who had been brought up in the royal court of Mithila was proclaimed king of this easily acquired kingdom. In imitation of the custom of the family of his god father the new king assumed the title Nara ka (protector of men) as Jana ka (protector of men) was the title of the royal family of Mithila. The capital was established near the present Gauhati town and its old name Prag Zuh. This was retained as Pragjyotishpur.

The name of this king is not recorded anywhere, but he is generally known by his surname or royal title Naraka, and according to the  
*Narska Title* traditional belief of his race or tribe he claimed descent from the union of mother Earth with the divine Boar in the same way as the old royal family of Scandanavia used to



The Elephant Seal of Kama upa Kings  
4th to 11th Centuries AD



The Boar—the Royal insignia of the Asura Dynasty



The Elephant—the Royal insignia of the Kamarupa Kings

claim "descent from the great goddess Freya, who was connected with the Boar." This mythological union of the earth with the boar is explained as a stage of geological evolution when the earth had just emerged out of water and was in a clayey state so that all the creatures on her were besmeared with clay like a boar soaked in mud; and the people claiming their origin from this mythological union, in other words, claimed themselves to be the first human race on the face of the earth. Very likely, the royal insignia was also a boar or perhaps the king wore the boar as a crest,

The god-father and the god-mother of Mithila were invited to the kingdom to bless their enterprising god-son, which they did gladly.

**Maithili Influence** The kingdom was gradually extended and the people from Mithila were brought to man and administer the country. Maithili culture spread in Assam and gradually influenced the Austric and the Bodo cultures—sometimes by annihilation and sometimes by assimilation. Some of the Bodos and the Austrics held their own ground in the hill areas—sometimes as vassals and sometimes as independent rulers. The Austric Ka-Meikha and the Bodo U. Me-Ludai were gradually assimilated to the Hindu pantheon and became goddess Kamakhya and Siva Umananda.

The Naraka dynasty ruled for several generations and Hindu culture spread over Assam unabated. But this also gave an impetus to the Asuras living in other parts of India. Many of them flocked to the kingdom ruled by a King of their race, and others who could not move, owed theoretical allegiance to Naraka and sent him contributions from their respective areas. Thus the Asuras living in western, north-western and northern parts of India considered themselves subjects of Naraka, and each leader of the group in those areas considered himself a deputy of Naraka.

The country flourished tremendously in all respects; wild elephants were caught and trained, gold grains were collected from the rivers, and an umbrella decorated with jewels of high refracting power that on reflection of light looked like drops of rain, was the covet of all kings in other parts of India. This was called **Varuna-Chatra** or the Umbrella of the sea god Varuna; for, as stated before, the Asuras considered the sea-god as their protector. Iron ores were also smelted and weapons made with the metal. It is said that the capital town of Naraka was fenced round with iron palisades.

Medicine with indigenous drugs was used profusely according to certain codified methods and a particular system of treatment of ailments by indigenous drugs—still practised by certain village quacks in Assam—was known as the Asuri system of treatment. Maithili language with Asuri accents mixed with Austric and Bodo words became the dialect of the common people. The picture of an elephant was used as the royal insignia on flags and seals and the Bodo and the Austric soldiers trained in an improved manner and mounted on elephants were terrors to the rest of India.

But the same power could not last for ever. In about 1900 B C the Tripura Bodos established an independent kingdom in the Kapili valley and then the Dimacha Bodos established another **Ban Asur** in the North Eastern frontier area. The people of the Deva party captured all the offices and ran the administration and a separate independent kingdom was established by an energetic Asura chief in the present Dinajpur District of Bengal ousting the Dimacha Bodos in that area. This was the kingdom of Bana Asura with its capital at Sonitpur which is said to have been located on the bank of the Lohit river not far away from the sea.

This young energetic man Bana was farsighted and he promptly saw the miserable plight to which the kingdom of the brother of his race in Pragjyotisha was being led and he warned the last Naraka against the grave danger of giving a free hand in all matters of the state to the Deva party. Naraka realised the situation and at once replaced all the officials of the state by the people of his race—by recruiting them from different parts of India. He married a princess of his race from a small state in Berar in the Deccan and discarded all the religious observances of the Deva school of thought. An Asura institution named Parasuram Kunda was established at the source of the Lohit river and Kamakhya was relegated to the Austrics who were now centralised in the Khasi and the Jaintia Hills for observance of their national festivals and ceremonies.

A great communal tension ensued and a sage of the Vasistha family of Ayodhya was brought in by the Hindus to effect a compromise but **Communal Tension** Naraka took a stern attitude and issued a prohibition order on him against entering the shrine of Kamakhya. This was a great insult, and the whole population of the Hindus started a vigorous agitation in which their women folk also joined. With a

stern attitude Naraka imprisoned the women—it is said—sixteen thousand in number. This dealt a severe blow at the self respect of the Hindus and shocked the whole Hindu India. Sree Krishna, the King of Dwarka (Guzerat)—the leader of the Deva party at the time, came with a strong army and after a very stiff fight killed Naraka and disbanded his army. Naraka's treasury was looted, his trained elephants were presented to the king of Delhi, his jewelled umbrella was taken away and Naraka's son Bhagadatta was installed on the throne as a vassal and ally of the Devas denuded of the hereditary title of his family. After a few years, Bana's kingdom was similarly invaded and won and the Asura influence in the eastern part of India was crushed for ever. This was about 1500 B. C

Naraka's son Bhagadatta did not forget the insult, and when the king of Delhi with his ally Sree Krishna was involved in the great war of Kurukshetra, he sided with their enemy and personally took part in the battle on his elephant with his Bodo soldiers, where he was eventually killed. Other Bodo chiefs of the Dimachas and the Tiphras, however, sided with the party of Sree Krishna.

History or Mythology, the battle of Kurukshetra which is estimated to have been fought in 1449 B. C. stands as a tangible land-mark in the history of India. All the kingdoms and the states and all the races of India joined one or the other party in this disastrous war; and the ultimate result of it was a chaos in social, political, economical and religious atmospheres of the whole of India. As Arjuna, the hero of the war foresaw at the beginning, free admixture of blood took place unchecked, and various mixed races sprang up in different parts of the country.

Bhagadatta was killed on the battle field of Kurukshetra. His son Vajradatta ascended his father's throne, and he was in due course, succeeded by his son Somadatta. Somadatta is said to have been treacherously assassinated by his minister Sambeswar—who claimed to have had the blood of the solar dynasty in his veins, and usurped the throne. A chaotic condition followed, and assassination of royalties and usurpation of the throne by any body who could gather a powerful following became the order of the day. No systematic account—either mythological or traditional—is available for a long period.

2 About the sixth century B. C. various races of mixed blood—pro-

bably of Austric, Bodo and Aryan origin sprang up in the North and the North eastern India in the Himalayan belt and they ruled over small states with a spirit of racial superiority and self determination, with a kind of feudal system of Government. They were the Lichhavis the Kollas, the Sakyas the Mallas—the Jhallas &c. Buddha the great, was born in the Sakya family in about 567 B C, at Kapilavastu in Nepal terrain and all these races were converted to his faith. Buddha died in about 487 B C at Kushinagar near Gorakhpur in the Kingdom of the Mallas, and all these races took the remains of their Lord's body and entombed them in their respective kingdoms as a sacred relic.

One hundred years after the demise of Buddha, a disruption took place amongst his followers and a conference of seven hundred Bhikshus was held at Wesali (Basargaon in the Tirhut district) where the schism took a definite shape and the Buddhists were divided into two schools of thought—the Hinayana—or the orthodox, and the Mahayana or the progressive.

All these races were great warriors and very enterprising and they lived quite close to the border of Assam. The Kingdom of the Kollas had the tradition of being the birth place of Narakasura.

It is therefore, very likely that some people of these races migrated to Assam, and it is also likely that after the conference at Wesali, another conference was held by the followers of the Buddhist faith in Assam. Assam is known as Wesali Loung to the Tibetans, the Chinese and the Burmans.

The temple of Hajo is believed to contain a relic of Buddha's body, and it is also held by a section of the Buddhists that the great Master attained Nirvana on the Hajo Hill.

A band of enterprising people of the Deccan known as the Talaiings either of Kalinga (Orissa) or of the Telegu country migrated eastward and established a kingdom named Hsare Kettara (Sree-Khetra) at Prome in Burma in about 543 B C. Abhiraja a prince of the Kolla race is said to have migrated eastward as the result of a quarrel with the king of Panchala and founded Tagaung or Sankassa in Burma and established himself there as a King. All these migrations must have taken place either through Arakan or Assam and Manipur.

Asoka the great held the second Buddhist Conference in the 2nd century B C. and sent out Buddhist preachers to different parts of the



world to preach the tenets of the great Master: and while China, Burma and Ceylon were accessible to the Buddhist emissaries, it is unthinkable that Assam was left outside the programme.

No historical records of this period however, make any mention of Assam in particular. When Alexander the great invaded India in 327 B.C. he was informed of a very powerful king of the Tabresians and the Gandaritae. This king does not appear to have had any connection with the king of Assam, as Gandaritae or Gangaredii does not appear to have extended beyond the limits of Bengal. The Periplus of the Erythraean sea written in the first century A. D. makes no mention of Assam area in particular, but before reaching the Gangetic delta the greek navigator met with flat nosed Kirrhadais, and other tribal races in the area now identified with Orissa and the neighbouring countries.

During this period, the political situation in Assam must have been under various chiefs in small principalities, and the Kiratas being the main population, the country was described as Cilata in the Nagarjuni Kunda inscription of the 2nd century A. D.

Buddhism had already spread to Tibet and China by this time, and the Kirata traders being influenced by this religion, and also due to the Buddhist migration as stated above, the guiding religion in the country appears to have been Buddhism.

The western part of Assam—the present Goalpara and Kamrup districts—is known in common parlance even in the present day as Dhekor country, and the people are slightly designated as Dhekeris. The Buddhist records consider Dhekor as a great religious centre of the faith. A copper plate grant of the 12th century A. D. and all Ahom chronicles of later period referred to this part of the province as Dhekkar. An old site with several high earthen mounds to the north of the Barpeta-Road Railway station is pointed out as the ruins of the house of king Dhak Malla.

Dhekkar appears to be a corruption of the word Thakkar or Thakur—the hereditary title of the Buddhist Kings of Sibolith (Svapadalaksha) of the United Provinces. It is therefore, very likely that the Mallas who had migrated to Assam assumed the title Thakkar and settled in the western part of Assam. It is they who carried the tradition of their original home to Hajo.

An earthen mound known locally as Makhi-baha (ant-hill) near

the Tihu Railway station is mentioned in the eleventh century copper plate of Kamarupa Kings as a centre of the followers of Thata-gata Buddha,

## Chapter VIII

### THE VARMAN DYNASTY

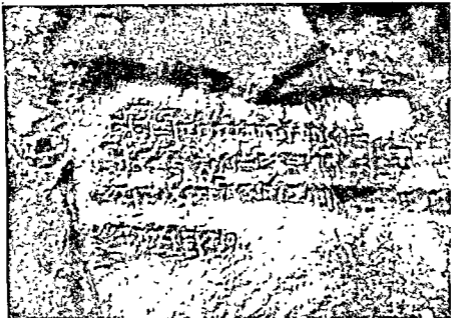
(350 A. D -654 A. D.)

After the Greek invasion, various races and tribes entered India by the west and the north-west and along with the Greek, *Greek Invasion.* Hun and Scythian races of high culture, Khasas, Malayas of inferior culture established various Kingdoms in various parts of the country. A wave of Hellenistic culture in art and religion began to flow slowly and gradually over India.

Various energetic leaders either being ousted by the new invaders or being inspired by a desire for new adventure, moved *Malava-Varman.* to different places in the eastern direction and established new kingdoms. An adventurer of the Bombay Presidency Adji-Saka established a kingdom in Java in the 2nd century A. D., while a prince of Malava established a kingdom in the Bankura district of Bengal near Puskarana.

In the fourth century A. D. the Imperial Guptas came into power in Magadha, and about this time Chandra-Varma—the brother of the *Imperial-Guप्तas* Malava King Mahendra Varma was perhaps the ruler of a small kingdom near Puskarana. About this time, we hear of a King named Pusya Varma rising to power all on a sudden in Kamarupa, declaring himself a scion of the old Naraka dynasty, owning allegiance to the Gupta emperor of Magadha and driving the ruling King of Kamarupa to the east to Dovoka in the Kapuli valley in the present Nowgong district. This was about 350 A. D.

Who this Pusya Varma was, and how he traced his pedigree are not known, but a tradition is current amongst the Hajongs—a Bodo race *Pusyavarma.* of Assam—that Pusyavarma's original name was Pradangshu, and he was the son of a fugitive princess of Malava area, who fled for her life to Kamarupa when her husband



Rock Inscription of Mahabhuti Varman 234 Gupta  
(554 A.D.), Baraganga, Mikir Hills.



Hatakeswar Siva Lingam 5th century A.D.  
Ketekibari-Tezpur.



Carved Image on the Rock of Baraganga Inscript'

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and father-in-law were killed in a battle with the Satavahanas. This tradition, when connected with the Varman Kings mentioned in the Susunia rock inscription of Bankura and in the Meharauli pillar inscription of Delhi makes irresistible suggestion that Pusya Varman belonged originally to central India. When Samudra Gupta extended his kingdom up to Bengal, this Pusya Varma, whoever he might have been perhaps helped the Gupta emperor, and with his help ousted the king of Kamarupa, and himself became the king of this country; and then either by matrimonial alliance with the old royal family of the country or by diplomatic tactics, declared himself to be the descendant of the ancient Naraka dynasty and adopted the elephant as the Royal insignia. The old king of Kamrupa who was perhaps a Bodo moved to the present Nowgong district and established the *Dovako* (present Doboka) Kingdom in the Kapili valley. Both the kings of Kamarupa and Dovako attended the royal conference convened by Samudra Gupta at Allahabad in token of their allegiance to or friendship with him.

After the death of Samudra Gupta, his son and heir Raja Gupta was worsted by the Khasas and other tribes of Northern India. Raja *Samudra Varma*. Gupta's brother Chandra Gupta had a hard time of it to crush the rebellious tribe whom he ultimately defeated in the battlefield of Bengal—as mentioned in the iron pillar now set up near the Kutub-minar at Delhi. Samudra Varma, the then King of Kamarupa stood as an ally of Chandra Gupta, and helped him a lot while Chandra Priya, the king of Dovako first joined the rebellious parties and then after the unsuccessful attempt sought the help of the Chinese emperor—though without any success. At this juncture, the tactful Samudra Gupta assumed the title of Maharaja-dhtraja with full independence, while the king of Dovako sank into insignificance though he lingered on for some time with independent position in his jungly area.

Under the Imperial Guptas, Hinduism which had been thrown into the shade for several centuries by the growth of Buddhism, shone forth with new vigour. Vedic ceremonies and observances *GuptaInfluence* were again practised with due solemnities, Vedic hymns were interpreted in the form of popular stories in Puranas. Old Epics were recompiled, treatise on astrology, medicine and other branches of Hindu Science were composed and Sanskrit literature in the forms of

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lyric and drama was written. Ancient Indian sculptures based on the Mathura school were remodelled and a new type of sculpture of the Devas of the Hindu pantheon was evolved with pure Indian cuts. Architecture in temples and palaces was evolved in a new style.

The Varman Kings of Kamarupa had direct relation with the Imperial Guptas and what developed in the Gupta Court was at once copied in Assam. Mahendra Varma of Kamarupa (480-500) performed the Vedic horse sacrifice twice in his capital and his grandson Mahabhuti Varma (520-554) followed the example of his grandfather and performed the sacred ceremony once. This sacred ceremony which was of the highest order speaks at once of the power, wealth and dignity of the King and also of the extent of perfection of the Vedic culture current in the country at the time. Certainly Brahmins of pure Vedic knowledge were not available in this Bodo-ridden country and they had to be imported from the central or south western parts of India and made to settle with extensive land grants in this country.

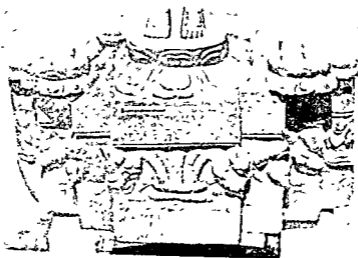
Hindu administrative laws as codified by Kautilya and Kamandaka were adopted for executive administration of the country with various officials in various departments from the Chief Justice and the Commander in Chief to the Keeper of Elephant herds and Detector of thieves.

Pure Sanskrit was adopted as the court language and the land grant to a Brahmin meant for the information of the general public was proclaimed in the purest Sanskrit language, inscribed in a copper plate in the alphabet current in the Gupta court. The common dialect of the ordinary people was probably the Magadhi Prakrit influenced by Asura (Paisachi) accent and Austric and Bodo intonation. The Gupta era was introduced to count the year, and very likely all offices were filled up by educated and highly talented persons recruited from Magadha and other parts of India.

Palakapya a sage living in his hermitage on the bank of the Lohit river at the foot of a high hill, at the point where the mighty river took a south westerly course, was an expert in Elephentology, as he had to deal with elephants in their wild state. This was evidently in the modern Goalpara district at the foot of the Garo Hills. The Services of this sage were requisitioned by the King of Anga country (modern Bhagalpur in the Behar Province).



Uma—Maheswar, Baraganga Shrine



Pedestal of Vasudeva Image from the ruins of the Baraganga Shrine



to advise him about the treatment of his herd of elephants that frequently went mad. The instructions of the sage have been embodied in the monumental work—Hastyaurveda in pure Sanskrit.

Poet Kalidasa of the fourth century A. D. referred to the King of Anga as having had requisitioned the services of the sage. This evidently shows that the book must have been composed previous to Kalidasa. Any how, the book is the oldest record of the literary activity of ancient Kamarupa.

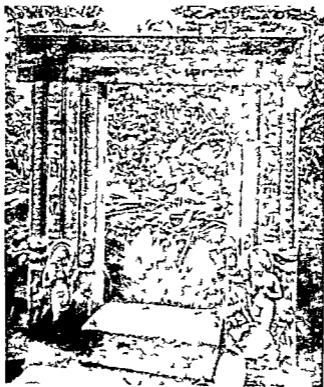
A section of the Brahmins who were probably brought to this country for performance of horse-sacrifice or for general educational and cultural improvement of the country, were granted extensive land grants by Mahabhuti-Varma in the district of Chandrapur on the bank of the dead channel of the Kausiki river. The original copper plate document for this royal grant having been spoilt, it was renewed again a hundred years afterwards, to the progeny of the original donees. A few plates of the second document have been found at Nidhanpur in the Karimganj Sub-division of Sylhet, and from them it is found that these Brahmins were all Saivites, and their tutelary deity was Hatokeswar (gold-lord) Siva. They were followers of various branches of the Vedas, and their surnames ended in Datta, Ghosh, Basu, Mitra, Kunda, Dhar etc.—family titles now used mostly by the high class Kayasthas of Bengal and Assam. From this, it is surmised by scholars that these Brahmins were probably recruits from Kathiwar of Guzerat, and were known as

What the system of education in those days was is not known. Any body gaining proficiency in any branch of learning got encouragement from the King by land grants or by appointments in some office of the court. **Education** The Chinese pilgrim in the seventh century A. D. found the people very impetuous and wild in nature, but they had retentive memories and were earnest in studies.

The King was perhaps as much an autocrat as any other mediaeval chief, and nothing could be done without his knowledge and sanction, but in the matter of general administration of the country, he was as liberal as any President of a modern democratic state, even a land grant to a Brahmin had to be endorsed by various heads of Departments before it was handed over to the proclaimer who would then proclaim it publicly with beats of five high sounding musical instruments.

Along with the observances of various pure Vedic ceremonies, worship of various Puranic gods and goddesses, Siva, Durga, Vishnu, &c was performed and their images were installed in temples in various parts of the country. **Religion** Mahabhuhi Varma was mentioned as a *Parama Bhagavata* or the great follower of the Vasudeva cult in the rock inscription of Badaganga dated 554 A. D. in the Mikir Hill area. Kamakhya became Maha Gauri and Umananda became Kameswar Siva.

Culture of various branches of the fine arts went on side by side with industrial development. Music and dances were special features in temples and in the royal palace. **Art & Industry** The Chinese traveller Hieun T'sang who came to the court of Bhaskar Varman in about 642 A. D. was entertained in the palace daily with dance and music. A dancing girl was so enamoured of her patron king Bhaskarvarman—that when the latter died—she jumped into his funeral pyre in spite of protests from all sides and immolated herself. The Chinese traveller specially liked to take to his country as mementos—the *Halal* silk coat of bright lustre and a piece of well tanned soft skin from Kamarupa. The King of Konouj was specially delighted to have from his friend Bhaskar Varma the gifts of one umbrella decorated with jewels, a book written on finely polished sanchi bark, *aguru* sandal wood musk contained in a silk bag, a mat made with fine and coloured cane laths, fine molasses in an earthen jar, a pair of Bamuni ducks in a gold embroidered cage and a quantity of finely spun yarns of 'pai' and



Temple Door Frame



Ganga



Jamuna

Remains of Siva Temple Dahpabata Tezpur Darrang Dist

*Muga* silk. Rich jewels and gold ornaments worn by the king of Kamrupa used to be the objects of admiration of the kings of other parts of India.

Apart from the cultivation of paddy and pulses, the people cultivated the cocoanut and the 'Panasa' fruit specially in the area round about present Gauhati.

A kind of irrigation system by the water led from the river or banked up tanks maintained wide and deep moats round the capital city, and the remnants of these moats are still noticeable in the town of Gauhati.

The Gold-emporium at Suvarnakudya (Son-Kuriha near Hajo) was the meeting place of merchants from different parts of India, as the gold of Kamarupa extracted by washing the river sand was considered to be the purest and the best in quality.

What relation these kings of Kamarupa had with chiefs of the Bodo and other tribes living in the country is not definitely known. But it appears that there were many small states who owned allegiance to the superior authority of the king who was called Emperor—'Maharajadhiraj', and Kamrupa was at the time—not a kingdom—but an Empire. Some of these, sometimes created troubles and had to be again brought under control. During the reign of Mahabhuti-Varma, the power of the Imperial Guptas in the west got a set-back in the hands of Yasodharma Deva—the Maukhari invader of Malowā, who extended his sway up to the Brahmaputra in the east.

all over the country amongst the neighbouring Bodos and other races, the sentiments of their own religious ideas were not insulted nor crushed. Even Buddhists enjoyed royal favours and lived amicably side by side with other neighbours, the Buddhist University at Nalanda got regular contributions from the emperor of Kamarupa

But not a single Buddhist sangharam was established in the country, and such disciples of the faith as there were of a pure faith said their prayers (repeated the name of Buddha) secretly.

Bhaskar Varma was a powerful King He ascended the throne in in about 593—when he introduced a new Era—called the Kamarupi era He was very liberal in his religious ideas and was a great patron of learning, art and industry. During his time, the neighbouring country of Bengal was split into small kingdoms due to frequent political changes in the western part of India,—and one Sasanka—probably a scion or an ex-official of the Guptas became very powerful over a fairly large kingdom and bade fair to defy any big power in India. He was a Hindu of the most orthodox school, and he either incarcerated or was very unsympathetic to the Buddhists

What with the consideration of the menace at the western gate of the empire and what with his natural sympathies for the Buddhists, Bhaskar Varma joined hands with Harsha Vardhan the emperor of Konouj - the sworn enemy of Sasanka, and invaded his kingdom simultaneously in the two fronts Sasanka was vanquished, and his kingdom was shared between the two conquerors—the eastern portion including modern Purnea, Bahrapore and the whole of east Bengal including Sylhet came under the emperor of Kamarupa Vassal kings in various localities in this area owned allegiance to the mighty emperor of Kamarupa The Kamarupi era which is now lost in Assam appears to have been transformed into the Bengali era in Bengal and the Tripura era in Tipperah.

Hieun-Tsang—the professor of the Henan University of China—came to India to study the Maha-Yana school of thought of Buddhism and after travelling all over India came to the University of Nalanda in Patna The University was under Harshavardhan—the friend and ally of Bhaskarvarma and was being administered by the chief priest Silabhadra—a man of East Bengal which was then under the administration of Bhaskar-Varma.

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Buddha Janardan, Sukreshwar Ghat Gauhati



Sun shooting Darkness, Kamathya Hill Ruins



Sun Image Sukreshwar Ghat Gauhati

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what with his ardent regard for learning, Bhaskar Varma invited this great savant of the east to his capital and gave him a great ovation with due honour and pomp and heard with rapt attention and devotion the message of peace and universal Brotherhood from the great professor. A stone image of Buddha was carved on the bank of the Brahmaputra river near the capital city on a rock near the present Sukreswar temple and the country appeared to be surcharged with Bhuddhistic feelings—much to the annoyance of the orthodox Hindus of Vedic mentality. Continuance of the Buddhist sage for a long period in the royal court of Kamarupa was considered a menace to the Hindu religion in the country and the ears of Harshavardhana appear to have been poisoned against Bhaskar Varma by interpreting this special favour to the ambassador of China as an endeavour to establish a political alliance with the emperor of China for gaining ultimately a political supremacy over whole of India. This move had its effect and Harshavardhana peremptorily called back Hieun-T'sang from the Kamarupa court under the threat of invading Bhaskar Varma's empire if the Chinese traveller was not let go forthwith. The matter did not proceed further and was managed tact-fully by Bhaskar Varma—who was really innocent of such a heinous motive. He escorted the learned man personally to Allahabad where he met Harshavardhana. But there again, his simplicity and broad-mindedness sowed the seeds of future trouble when he personally took an active part in the great Buddhist fair arranged by Harshavardhana with Hieun-T'sang in the front.

Bhaskar Varma returned to his country, but his apparent Buddhistic proclivities had already created a secret agitation amongst the orthodox Hindus of which the Brahmins in the modern Tezpur area were perhaps the ring-leaders; and a movement was set on foot by rousing the various chiefs to a state of rebellion. The official in the Tezpur area—who was probably a Bodo having a very strong army of hill-tribes to keep in check the frontier races, was readily made the leader of the movement.

At this inopportune moment, Bhaskar Varma died leaving no heir for the throne—he was a bachelor throughout his life. Misfortune also befell the royal family of Konouj. One Avanti Varma ascended the throne of Kamrupa. The Buddha image was converted into the image of Vishnu and images of four more gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon were caused to be carved by its side.

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But the ball had already been set moving and the movement for rebellion had been gathering momentum in the country amongst various Bodo chiefs; and even before the carving of images on the Sukreswar rock could be completed, Avanti Varma, fell a victim to the invasion of the Mlechhas from all sides. The image of Durga is still incomplete and the converted image of Vishnu is still known as Budh-Janardan, i e., Buddha-Vishnu.

Avanti-Varma's court poet Vishakha-Datta; the son of a Hindu chief, vainly hoped in his Sanskrit drama—'Mudra-Rakshasa' the annihilation of the Mlechha invaders by his patron king, but royal family of the powerful Varman dynasty was ultimately ousted and power passed into the hands of another dynasty.



## Chapter IX

### THE MLECHHA DYNASTY.

(655 A.D.—1000 A.D.).

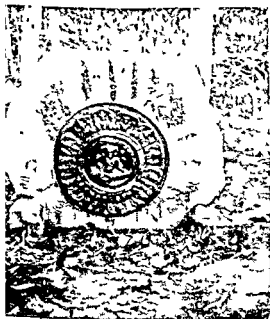
If the scrutiny of the culture and the civilisation of a race could be relied on for the true racial origin of the ruler, the task of ascertaining his pedigree would have been a very easy task; but the theory of evolution of culture and civilisation shows that when any particular civilisation flourished in a country, it spread its rays to the vanquished race and the neighbouring recalcitrant tribes, dazzling them either by its superior illumination or winning them over by matrimonial enticement or mercenary allurements; and thus created a class to rule over or suppress their own people. The progeny of the original adventurers gradually degenerated into a hopeless group due to the ease and comfort earned for them by their adventurous forefathers. This made it easy to conquer them by a stronger group of the same culture or by a band trained by their own culture, which was so long their meek ally or loyal servant, using their own weapon against them. The latter gained the mastery in two ways—firstly, by simply occupying



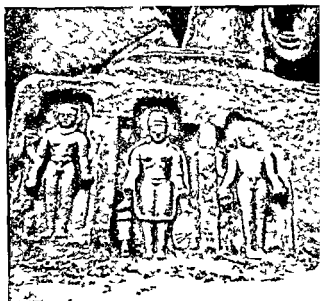
Rock cut cave Jogi gopha Goalpara



Five Budhisattas ( Pancha Ratna ), Sree Suryya H II Rock Goalpara



God with twelve Suns Sree Suryya Hill, Goalpara



Buddhist Triratna, Sree Suryya H II Rock, Goalpara



Brahma



Dancing Ganesha.

Barpukhurir par. Holeswar, Tezpur.



Rahu and Ketu, Singri Ruins, Tezpur. }



Vasudeva Image, River bed, Tihu, Kamrup.



Ar stocrat c H ndu Lady



Woman with child



Ar stocrat c Bodo Lady



Bodo woman

(From Ru ns of Kamakya Hill Gauhati)

the throne as a leader of a factious party—and identifying himself with all the aims and objects of the party that set him up; or by usurping the throne with a band of followers of his own race taking advantage of the weakness and degeneration of the ruling race, assimilating as much as possible of the culture and civilisation of the latter but at the same time, persisting in the conservative customs and ideas peculiar to his race; and thus evolving a hybrid culture. The new-fledged royal family traced its origin from a diplomatic motive—either to the family just vanquished or from a psychological motive to some mythological deity or planet or a beast blessed with supernatural power.

The royal family that replaced the Varman dynasty on the throne of Kamarupa is known in History as the Mlechha *Origin.* Dynasty, suggesting the origin to some non-Vedic and non-Sanskritised culture. The kings however, claimed themselves to be the scions of the ancient Naraka dynasty while the conservatives denied their claim and characterised them as a family of lucky upstarts of lower origin.

The first king of the family was named Salastambha, meaning the strong pillar of Saltuber of the state. He was—as stated before, probably a powerful official in charge of the northern frontiers with a strong army of tribal people under the Varman King and was probably flattered with this honorific title. He was set up as a leader by the orthodox Brahmins of Tezpur area against the Buddhist proclivities of Bhaskar-Varma, and when by this move amongst the tribal chiefs he succeeded in his rebellious movement and ousted Avanti-Varma, he was set up on the throne as the King, and was proclaimed as a descendant of the old Naraka family by his supporters—while the other party looked down upon him as a usurper.

The capital of the new King was shifted to the present Tezpur area and the city was named after the name of the tutelar *Capital.* deity of his supporters, as Hatokeswarpur and was later abridged to Hatopeswar or Haruppeswar. The King was however, under the full control of his Brahmin advisers and supporters, and in spite of his Bodo or other non-Vedic origin, the Brahmanical culture remained undisturbed and rather made a bolder stride in all directions in the country.

Taking advantage of the change of the royalty and the temporary

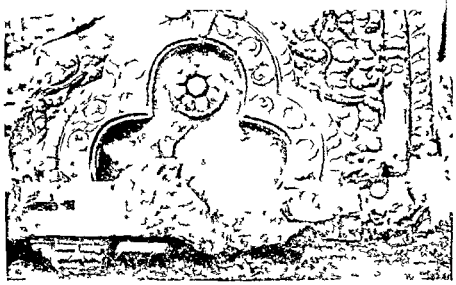
chaos that followed, the vassal kings of Bengal and Samatata (East Bengal) showed a tendency of withdrawing their allegiance, and the Tiphra-Bodo chief declared independence with Cachar and the western part of Sylhet under him. Later on, Sriharsha Deva (730-750) reorganised the country and with a powerful army swayed over Orissa, Bengal, Behar and a part of Oudh. Orissan states were manned by princes of Kamarupa, and the ruler of Nepal was made an ally by giving the Emperor's sister in marriage to him. Learned Brahmins of Singeri near Tezpur were sent to Orissa where they obtained land grants from rulers of those states by virtue of their superior learning. Architects and sculptors from Orissa and Kalinga were recruited in large numbers and made to settle in this country for construction of temples and carving of images. Expert sea-sailors were recruited from Orissa, Tanjore and Travancore to settle in this country and build up a powerful navy. Job-seekers from the Andhra and other Deccan countries were entertained as supervisors over the stone masons and sailors, and some of the delinquent princes of Orissa were banished to Kamarupa where they were made to settle with land grants.

But the supremacy of Harsha Deva soon met with a set-back when he went with his vassal king of Bengal to stem the tide of invasion of Yasodharma Deva from the west, and was killed in the battle field along with his ally. The king of Kashmir soon afterwards stretched his grip towards Bengal and threw that country into a state of chaos. The next king Vala-Varma of Kamarupa contracted friendship with the King of Kashmir by giving his daughter Amrita Probha in marriage to him and helping him with a learned Buddhist Pandit Stunapa from his country to help the latter to keep an eye over his newly acquired territory in Tibet; and thus saved his country.

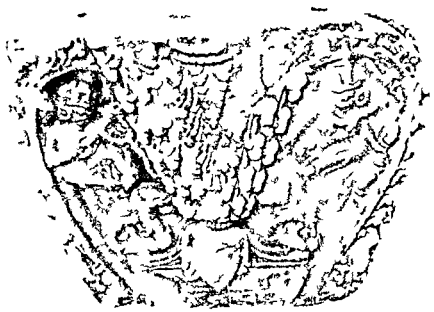
The crisis was soon overcome, and the country came back to normal order though the hold on Bengal and some parts of Samatata, Orissa, Behar and Oudh had completely gone. The old temple of Hatokeswar which had collapsed was reconstructed in a gorgeous style by Vanamala Varma (835-860) who also started construction of very many important temples in the country. The navy was greatly improved by Harjar Varma (820-835) during whose time the great tank-'Harjar Pukhuri'—a mile to the west of the Tezpur town was excavated. The naval soldiers called 'Kavartas' living in their barracks on the bank of the Brahmaputra river—about a mile down the







Port on of Stele of Sun Image Bamun Hill Ru ns Tezpur



Port on of Pillar Cap Deopa bat Numal garh



Frieze with Flying Vyadharas Deopa bat Nandalgarh

present steamer-ghat of Tezpur used to come into frequent conflict with the poor fishermen whose boats were alleged to foul the army boats that were kept moored in the river ; and to put a stop to this frequent trouble—which was probably created by the soldiers out of their natural high-handedness over the catches of the poor men, the King's prime minister Suchitta had to issue a Royal edict carved on a rock on the bank of the river—dated 510 Gupta (829 A. D.) prohibiting the boatmen from plying their boats inside the midstream-line and threatening them with a penalty of five pice for breach of the order. The rock with the royal order is still in existence.

The country once more shone forth with its glories in all directions. Saivites from Kashmir and the Deccan came and settled in this country.

**Saivism.** Former Vedic ceremonies like horse sacrifice were no longer practised but a vigorous movement against Buddhism was started by Kumarila Bhatta—who is supposed to have been born in Kamarupa. Tantricism gradually gained ground and Kashmiri Saivism became prominent. When Sankaracharyya—the great Vedantist reformer of Madras came to Assam,—he was vanquished in his polemical discussion by Abhinava Gupta—a Tantric pandit of Kamakhya, though it is said, by occult means.

The waters of the Brahmaputra near the capital city remained covered with well decorated large boats of the Royal navy ; the wide roads of the capital town bustled with the congested traffic of elephants, horses and chariots of merchants, princes and chiefs ; and shops of musk, sandal-wood, silk, gold, jewellery and cosmetics were congested with merchants, traders and purchasers.

Males and females danced together in temples and also in gatherings on festive occasions accompanied by musical instruments like drums, cymbals and flutes, while aristocratic women played on high class stringed instruments like the *veena*. Gallant youngmen used to amuse the audience by playing with tamed tigers in the open. The sculptor used his chisel to record all these minor events of daily life in black hard stone—that are even now found scattered all over the present town of Tezpur.

Men and women wore clothes from the waist to the ankle with a braided tuft in front, while the upper parts were decorated with necklaces, ear-rings, head-gears etc. A fragrant cosmetic made with paste of sandal wood and musk coated the protruding breasts of women and false tresses of hair added elegance to their locks.

The same form of Government—as before, according to the codes of Kautilya was followed by officials in charge of various departments

Tyag Sinha, the last king of the dynasty,—twenty first in order of succession, died childless after a weak reign and the country again relapsed into a chaotic state. A Bodo official—a Sootia of the Pator-Goya clan—who was the foreign Secretary for Jaintia state went over to that state with the people of his clan and by marrying Urvara—the daughter and heir of the female ruler of that country himself usurped the throne. With Krishak—the old order in Jaintia changed, and a male ascended the throne for the first time.

## Chapter X

### THE PALA DYNASTY

(1000 A D-1130 A D)

To avoid a rebellion in the country, the nobles and intellig of the orthodox group straightaway appointed by unanimous opinion one Brahma Pala who claimed to have descended from the Varman-dynasty, as their ruler and installed him on the throne. The hint was probably taken from Bengal when some two centuries back that country was saved from its chaotic condition by a similar election of one Gopala of the "Daso-Javi" caste. The conservatives were jubilant over the downfall of the Mlechha dynasty and they captured the mass-mind by claiming Brahma Pala as their God sent saviour—a direct descendant of Naraka.

Brahma Pala built his capital on the south Bank of the Brahmaputra—somewhere in the Kapili and the Jamuna valley in the present Nowgong district—very likely, near about present Hojai, and named it Durjoya or impregnable. The corruption from Durjoya to Dujal and then to Hojai appears probable.

After Brahma Pala, his son Ratna Pala the Great—set himself in right earnest to effect all round improvements in the country, Architecture and sculpture had undergone

Architecture &  
Sculpture.



Tripurari S va.



Apsara before an Ascetic



Fighting scene

(From Ruins of Deoparbat Numalgarh Golaghat)



Betala



Narasingha Visnu, Uzanbazar rock, Gauhati.



Visnu killing demon Madhu Kamakhya Hill Ruins.



Ganosa dancing on vehicle Mouse, Wall of Kamakhya Temple

various developments in other parts of India. Bengal under the Palas excelled in a new model of sculpture; Tanjore under the Cholas, and Hoysola and Hollabid under the Hoihoyas developed new types of Architecture; and it was not proper for Kamarupa to lag behind. But Bengal was over-ridden by Buddhistic influence while Kamarupa was still pure Hindu. The Tanjore King Rajendra Chola the Great, was the subject matter of common talk in the political circles all over India. He invaded Bengal in 1075, and established a kingdom in Sumatra. Rajendra Chola's son Joy Sinha II, and the Hoihoya King Gangeya Dev also invaded Bengal. Ratna Pala tactfully entered into friendly relations with the Deccan kings, got his son Purandara Pala married to the Hoihoya princess Durlabha and recruited a large number of architects and sculptors from Tanjore, Mysore and Travancore and made them settle in the country. With the help of these architects and *Kal-Tatons* (stone workers) he literally adorned his country with temples and palaces, so much so, that any body looking up could see nothing but pinnacles of temples scraping the sky, and laughing faces of women loitering on the corridors of palaces. The whole of the Kapili and the Jamuna Valley—beginning from Kajalmukh near Gauhati right up to Dighalpani in the heart of the Mikir Hills, is still full of ruins of old temples and sculptures at very short distances apart. The next kings also kept to the programme and on the north bank, ruins of this period are still found at Borsola—28 miles to the west of Tezpur; and in the north east were the ruins of Sadiya pertain to the Pala period.

The various races of people who were brought from different parts of India by the former kings of Assam and the people of the Deccan who came to Assam during the Pala period either as temple labourers, job-seekers or retinue to the Hoihoya princess were gradually naturalised and became Assamese. The stone masons were called *Kal-Tatons* (Tamil-Kallu, Kal-Stone; Taton-worker) and they probably gradually formed the Kalita or Kalita community taking into their fold other allied artists—carpenters and metal workers. The inhabitants of the Chola country were known as Chollas and they now use the designation as a family title in the form of Cholihā. The Durga-worshipper Kakatiya Kshatriyas of the Andhra kingdom who came to this country as job-seekers became hereditary record-keepers and scribes and their race name has now been turned into family title signifying the hereditary profession. The people of the royal families

of Orissa who were brought to Kamarupa by Sri Harshadeva continued to use the title of Dubaraj (Jubaraj Prince) as a memento of their past pedigree, and this has now been transformed into Duara or Dowerah after undergoing transformations to Dubaraj Dubara

Though the country was filled with Hindu temples and Hindu immigrants from the Deccan the tide of Buddhism and Buddhist-Tantrics Buddhist Tantricism with magical demonstrations of supernatural power could not be stemmed and waves of missionaries flocked to this country from the neighbouring country of Bengal Samanta Sobha a naval officer (Kaivarta) of the court of Indrapala embraced this religion and renounced the world and evolved a new cult called 'Sahaja Buddhism, which found ready acceptance in Nepal and Tibet where he was adored as the Lord of the Luhit country or Luipada The songs composed by him in the common dialect of the country were devotedly sung by his followers

Raman Vajra, formerly a Buddhist monk and then a Nath of the Hotha yoga school under the name of Gorok-Nath became a disciple of Luipada whom he perhaps met in Nepal and vigorously propagated this new religion with certain modifications This was now a combination of the orthodox Nath cult of Hotha yoga and Buddhist Tantricism Luipada was proclaimed the incarnation of Mina Nath the originator of the Nath cult, and his Kaivarta origin was interpreted as being in the role of grouping together all castes and creeds high or low, big or small, just as a fisherman by casting his net gathered all classes of fish big or small This was a very convenient religion for Bengal where the King had both Hindu and Buddhist subjects, and these Neo-Naths got considerable support from the Pala and the Chandra Kings of Bengal Their head quarters were at Sandwip where under royal patronage they wrote a series of popular books on their religion and easily captured the mass mind

The emissaries of this religion flocked to Kamarupa in large number and by their songs and demonstrations of magical feats so easily captured the mind of the masses that gradually all the Hindu scriptures in the houses of the common people of Kamarupa were replaced by 'Kaulajñana Nimaya' the sacred book of the Sahaja-Nath.

Dharma Pala (1090 1115) was himself influenced greatly by this religion and ultimately he renounced the world as a mendicant This king shifted his Capital from Durjaya to a new place on the bank of





Visnu sitting on Ananta Snake Sukreshwar Temple Gauhat



Chandra Sekha & Siva Dancing on Yeh clo—Bull  
( Rever bed Uzanbazar Gauhat )



Ugachanda Durga Uzanbazar rock  
Gauhat

the Kapili river and named the new city 'Kamarupa-Nagar' which again was subsequently named Kamarupa Pur, and is now known as Kamrup—a sub-station in the Nowgong district.

The Buddhist-Tantrics had now a strong hold in Hojai or Ojai (Durjoya) which they called Ojjiana or Oddiana. They had other outposts in the Goalpara district where at Yogighopha, Pancharatna and Sree-Suryya Pahar they established regular religious centres. The Sahajia-Naths had established strong holds in Rangjuli, Bijoypur (Barnagar), Kondoli, Dovoka and Bakulia and associated these places with the heroes of their religion in their songs and ballads.

Rama Pala, the king of Bengal, took advantage of these fifth columnists and at a weak moment of the king of Kamarupa when after **Bengal Invasion** Dharmapala had renounced the world and Joypala came to the throne—he sent his general Mayan with a strong army to invade Kamarupa. Poor Joypala was easily ousted and Mayan established a town at Kajali-Mukh east of Gauhati and named it Mayanagarh which was peopled by his Buddhist-Tantric emissaries. The place is now called Mayang and is still looked upon by the Assamese people with a disdainful awe as a centre of dangerous witchcraft.

Mayan did not live for long in this country, he returned to Bengal after installing one Tingya Deva—perhaps a scion of one of the old royal families of Kamarupa, as a vassal king. Tingya Deva shifted his capital to the north bank of the Brahmaputra to modern Tezpur where the ruins of the Tingyeswar Siva temple about a mile to the west of the steamer-ghat still retains his memory. But when Rama Pala was engaged in a war with Orissa, Tingya Deva disavowed allegiance to the king of Bengal and declared independence. But unfortunately, he could not stand against the mighty Bengali soldiers led by Vaidya-Deva the son of the minister of Kumara Pala who had succeeded Rama Pala, and after fighting valiantly with his brave Kamarupi soldiers, he lost his life in harness in the battle field in 1130 A.D; and with him, the independence of the Kamarupa Empire was lost for ever.

Already a centre of the mother cult of the Austrics, and the phallic **Centre of Tantricism.** cult of the Bodos, Kamakhya now easily assimilated the Buddhist-Tantricism and Nath-Sahajism and evolved a new form of Tantricism modified by pure Saivism—and was at once looked upon as the first centre of the cult.

The Palas of Kamarupa are known in History as Bhauma Palas (from Bhumi Earth) or Varahi Palas (from Varaha Boar) on account of their origin from the mythological union of Earth and Boar, to distinguish them from the Palas of Bengal of the same period

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## Chapter XI

### THE UNSETTLED PERIOD

#### (a) The Deva Dynasty :-

After the conquest of Kamarupa, the Government of the country was taken over by Vaidya Deva as the Viceroy of the ruler of Bengal, with his headquarters at Betna in North Gauhati, but soon afterwards, taking advantage of various treacherous intrigues in the court of Bengal, he declared himself a Maharajadhiraja. But there was a shrewder man to utilise this opportunity to better advantage. Vijoy Sena—a descendant of an official of the great Rajendra Chola, who had settled in the western part of Burdwan—moved on to Bengal with a strong army, captured the throne easily and then proceeded eastwards. Frightened at this fresh and unexpected invasion of the parent country, Vaidya Deva gathered his limited resources and remained satisfied with the western portion of Kamarupa and a few eastern districts of Bengal, and left the eastern part of the vast Kamarupa Empire to take care of itself. His kingdom was named Kamota.

Vaidya Deva ruled probably from 1130 to 1150 A. D. and after him four more kings Rayari Deva, Bhaskar Deva, Ballabha Deva and Prithu Deva appear to have reigned over the country from the present Darrang district in Assam in the east to Dinajpur in present Bengal to the west. The Senas of Bengal were originally inhabitants of the Carnatic in the Deccan having migrated to this part of the country in the train of Rajendra Chola of Tanjore in 1025 A. D. They were orthodox Hindus. The Brahmins who came with them were fanatically bent on crushing the Buddhist religion current in Bengal in previous regimes, and introduced a very rigorous system of caste distinction. They however, introduced an artistic school of stone sculpture with fine cuts and elaborate ornaments known as the Sena Sculpture.



Mahismardini Durga, Bhoiparbat, Mikir Hills



Deity with 9th century Inscription



Joy Durga.

[Deopani Ruins, near Golaghat]

The Deva Kings of Assam maintained cultural relationship with Bengal, and installed some images of the Sena school. The ruins of Lalmati near Abhoyapuri in the Goalpara district belong to this period, and the huge images of dancing Ganesh and Brahma at Holeswar near Tezpur and the Sun image with various attendants at Gohpur in the Darrang district are beautiful specimens of Sena Sculpture. The last three images were installed in simple brick-built buildings. The images were probably brought from Bengal and the kings had neither resources nor time to construct stone temples befitting the images. The Goalpara area was under a deputy—Isvara Ghosh whose area due perhaps to the Buddhistic influence—was known as Dhakkari. He made a land grant to a Brahmin of the Gwalitippika district in his area. The present name of Goalpara is perhaps a derivative from Gwalitippika—which literally means Gwall village.

During the reign of the last king Prithu-Deva, the Muhammedans first ventured on into this area. The Turk General Bakhtiyar Khiliji—who easily conquered Bengal taking advantage of the social disruption caused by the introduction of rigours of caste distinction and race prejudice by the Brahmin advisers and Kayastha ministers of the Sena kings of that country, led an expedition to China through Assam; but due to the tactful stratagem adopted by Prithu, he had to go back pell-mell losing a large number of his valient soldiers at North-Gauhati in March 1206 A. D. The rock inscription at North-Gauhati records the sad plight of the Turk-General.

The eastern portion of the Kamarupa empire, which Vaidyadeva neglected was taken possession of by various chiefs and upstarts of various races and tribes—about whom more will be said hereafter; and due to this chaotic and unsettled condition in the country made still more miserable by a devastating flood, most of the rich and the intelligentsia of this part of the country evacuated to Kamota kingdom. The Kapili valley area was held on by a prince of the old Pala dynasty—perhaps as a vassal to the Deva rulers with his capital at Kampur.

The Muhammedans never forgot the disaster sustained by one of their race due to the treachery of the ruler of the kingdom of Kamota, and the next ruler of Bengal—Iowaz Khan who cut off all connections with the emperor of Delhi and declared himself independent—led an invasion against this country again in 1223 A. D. He penetrated right into Nowgong and took possession of a hillock to the east of Doboka and sacrificed a cow on it. The hillock is still known as Garukata hill.

Viswa Sundara Deva, the ruler of the Doboka Kingdom, who had suzerainty over Lanka, Jaintia and the neighbouring states soon collected a strong force, and inflicted a crushing defeat on the Muhammedan force which had to run pellmell along the foot of the Mikir and the Garo Hills

Viswa-Sundara Deva who is described as the worshipper of Varaha-Vishnu, performed a sacrifice in 1149 Saka (1223 A D) in the shrine at Gachtol near Doboka, and an inscription on the stone pillar of the ruined temple at Gachtol mentions this incident

The Muhammedan invasion was again repeated in 1227 A D by Nasiruddin—who dealt a crushing blow at Prithu-Deva in the battle To atone for the disgrace sustained at the hands of the Muhammedans Prithu Deva immolated himself by jumping into a pond, and after him, his kingdom passed under the nominal control of the Muhammedans The position was further worsened by Yujbeg by a fresh attack in 1245 A. D

At this time, immigration of Muhammedans began slowly into this part of the country, and in 1312 A D, the Moor traveller Ibn Batutah, the ambassador of the emperor of Delhi to China, on his way through Assam, met a Muhammedan sage, Shah Jelal on a hillock to the west of the Garo hills—near present Mahendraganj, surrounded by a large number of disciples

But Prithu's throne at last passed into the hands of his minister's family in 1340 A D—when Pratapdhvaj—a Kayastha, a hereditary **Kayastha-King** minister class—took over the reins of the Kamota kingdom, first as a vassal to the Muhammedan ruler of Bengal and then as a defying rebel—successfully standing against the powerful enemy To facilitate administration, the kingdom was divided into two parts. The headquarters of the western portion Kamota or Gaud were in Rangpur at Kamotapur, those of the eastern portion Kamapur, were at North Gauhati But soon afterwards, the rulers of these two areas began to quarrel among themselves on the issue of succession though the Muhammedan menace in the west never ceased to make its appearance. The ruler of the western kingdom was known as Kamoteswar and that of the eastern kingdom as Kameswar

The administration became slack and culture received a set back Village bards, however, continued to maintain the literary tradition in **Ballads** Kamota by composing ballads and lyrics on popular subjects in the dialect of the mixed people of Kamarupa

## THE UNSETTLED PERIOD.

and Bengal, while in the Kapili valley, Mahamanikya Deva—a scion of the ancient Varahi-Pala dynasty—patronised Madhav Kondoli, a Brahmin of Nowgong, to translate various chapters of the Sanskrit epic Ramayana.

In order to administer the eastern portion of the Kampura kingdom which was frequently threatened by hill tribes from the north and **Kamota and Kamrup.** which had been practically denuded of decent people, Dharmapala in 1345-1370 brought seven families of warlike Kayasthas from Kamota and made them settle in various areas with extensive land grants, investing them with a kind of feudatory power over their areas. These Kayasthas were accompanied by seven Brahmin families who also received similar privileges.

Dharmapala with the help of his new allies annexed the Kapili valley to his kingdom, killing Suvahu—the last king of the Varahi Pala dynasty—and driving away the latter's son Ruvar, alias **Kasyap-nagar.** Padmanabha, who had married a Dimacha-Bodo Princess, to the Kalo-Jinjiram valley at the foot of the Garo Hills. Padmanabha's son Kasyap established an independent kingdom there with his capital Kasyap-Nagar now known as Koshba near Garobandha. Ruins of innumerable temples and forts all over the area from Phulbari to Garobandha along the foot of the Garo hills testify to the glory of this last family of one of the most ancient dynasties of Kamarupa. The name of the last king Mahendra—who was incidentally a Koch of Sualkuchi near Gauhati and who inherited the throne by marrying the princess and heir—is commemorated in the name of his city—Mihendraganj. But Dharma Pala owing to his whimsical mentality, meddled with the religious susceptibilities of his subjects by slighting the much vaunted supernatural power alleged to have been possessed by Kendu Kolat—the chief Tantric priest of Kamakhya. This is said to have ultimately brought his ruin. He had to leave the country leaving it to be ruled by the feudatory immigrant chiefs from Kamota—who were then known as Bhuyans.

### (b) THE BHUYANS :—

The Bhuyans became masters of their limited areas though various successors to Dharma Pala's throne retained nominal supremacy over them. There were constant quarrels amongst these successors specially at the time of each succession; and at last one of them shifted his capital to the east of modern Tezpur and established a new capital, Protapgarh,—it being named after him, in about 1385. After this,

several generations ruled as insignificant kings till about 1498 A D

The western kingdom of Kamota met with a worse fate. It passed into the hands of a Bodo race—known as the Khens or the Khyens—perhaps a race which had originally migrated from the Tartar area of Central Asia like the Kachins or the Kakhyens. With the help of the high class Hindus of that area they maintained the Hindu culture, themselves being initiated into it, till at last in 1498 A D, the powerful Hossain Shah of Bengal defeated the last Khen king Nilambar and annexed his kingdom. Hossain Shah's army proceeded up to Gauhati where they found it plain sailing, and by defeating the last king Viravahu, Hossain Shah's son Danial was posted in North Gauhati as the Deputy of his father. Many Muhammedan families were settled near about Hajo and the Muhammedan Pir Ghiasuddin Aulia, who accompanied the party, constructed a mosque near Hajo and declared the place to be of one fourth the sanctity of Mecca. The place is still known as Poa (one fourth) Mecca. Thus a new element in race and religion was added to the already heterogenous elements in the empire of Kamarupa.

The Bhuyans accommodated themselves to the Muhammedan rule owing perhaps to the liberal and compromising principles of Hossain Shah, for which this great king was famous. Many of them gladly wore the Muhammedan decoration "Khan" after their names as family titles. Their feudal prerogatives were left undisturbed, and when the Muhammedan hold was again slackened in 1503 with the death of Danial, they shone again in their past glory. The Muhammedans who were left behind had no other alternative than to live with their Hindu neighbours as brethren under the Bhuyan rulers.

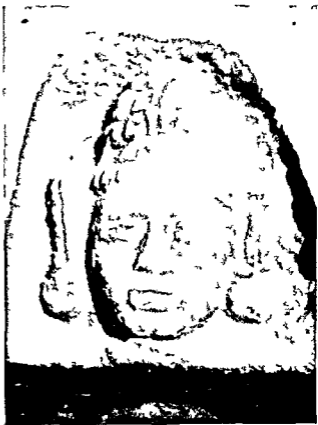
### (c) THE JITARI DYNASTY —

As stated before, during the first period of the Bhuyan supremacy in Kamarupa, the kings of the eastern kingdom of Kamapur were the nominal rulers of that country. One Ramchandra alias Mriganko, great grandson of Dharma Pala who had brought the Bhuyans ascended the nominal throne in his capital at North Gauhati in about 1382 A D. He had a beautiful wife Chandraprobha of whom he was very much enamoured. On account of frequent floods of the Brahmaputra, his capital was damaged repeatedly and the people starved for famine. Poverty of sound religious knowledge mixed with degraded superstition interpreted this as a calamity due to the wrath of the Brahmaputra. It was prophesied, the river God would be





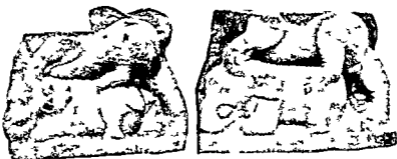
Vasudeva Image Gosainjuri Doboka



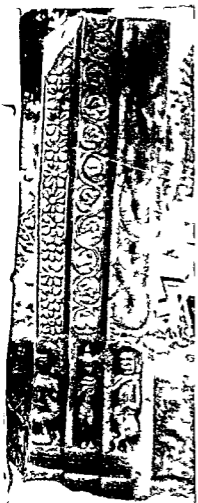
Head of the King Mkrati Doboka



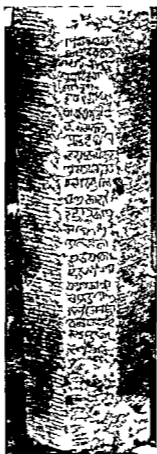
Pedestal for an Image Mkrati Doboka



Gaja Singha Motff Mkrati Doboka



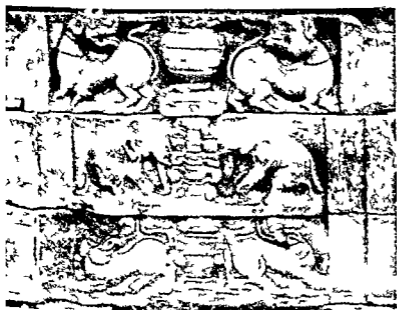
Door Frame Gachtol Doboka



Stone Pillar Gachtol Doboka Inscr pt on  
Date 1145 Sak or 1223 A D



Door Frame Bur Gossan  
Sthan Mkr Hills



Door Sills Gachtol Doboka



Port on of Door Frame Lalmat Goalpara

propitiated if the king's beloved queen could be sacrificed. For the welfare of his subjects and the good of the country, the king most reluctantly agreed to the preposterous recipe, but as the queen was carrying at the time, she was left adrift on a raft in the river. Wind and current tempered the cruel heresy with mercy and drifted the raft ashore to the edge of the Kamakhya hill where a Brahmin mendicant of the Deccan (or Behar)—Jitari by name, caught hold of the raft and taking pity upon the poor woman took her to his cottage. The tradition says—the queen was ravished by the river.

Disgusted and broken-hearted, the king left the country to the Bhuyans and migrated with his followers to the east and established a capital near Biswanath, east of present Sootea in the Darrang district; and after assuming a new name Protap Singha named his new capital Protapgarh. The unfortunate Chandraprobha gave birth to a lucky son in the hermitage and he was brought up by the kind-hearted mendicant. When this boy came of age, he was installed as the king of Kamapura by the nobles at the initiative of the mendicant in a new capital at Betna, near the old garh of Vaidya Deva. The new capital was named Arimatta Garh after the name of the new king. Being the god-son of the mendicant Jitari, the king proclaimed himself to be a descendant of his family.

When Protap Singha migrated to the east, the Bhuyans disowned his authority, and therefore, after crushing the Varahis, he directed his attention towards the west to punish these delinquents. But these hereditary diplomats set the son against the father, and in the conflict that ensued, the most disgracefully pathetic scene in the whole history of the Hindu politics of the ancient Kamarupa empire took place: the son slew his father in the field in a face to face combat. The blood that spurted out of the gaping wound of the dying old father calmed the surge of rage in the veins of his cruel adversary and roused in him the instincts of filial love that so long lay inhibited.

Arimatta expiated his crime by doing penances as laid down by the scriptures and made profuse gifts to the Brahmins, the fabulosity of which is traditionally connected even now with the '*Pitha-guri parbats*' situated to the east of Soo'ea. The father's kingdom automatically devolved upon the son. The latter extended it further east into the Kalita Kingdom, right up to present Hārmati where his name is still associated with the ruins of some temples.

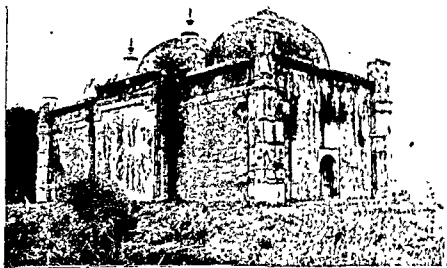
But greater remorse was in store for Arimatta, and at the fag end

of his reign, Fingua, the king of western Kamota, being driven away by the Bodo Khen invaders, sought refuge in Arimatta's capital, and then entering into an illicit intrigue with the latter's wife drove him out of the country. The disheartened and remorseful patricide finally immolated himself in the Borolia (Buroi near Behali) river, close to the spot where he committed the heinous sin. His son Ratna Singha however, regained the paternal throne after killing the usurper, and after him two more kings Sataranka and Mriganka ruled, but the last king Valahu or Virbahu had to flee to the south bank at the advent of Hossun Shah in 1498 A D. Valahu raised a well fortified city in the Nowgong district near Dharmtul on the bank of the Kollong river, and the ruins of the ramparts by the side of the Assam Trunk Road still retain the tradition of his name and bravery. With him ended this dynasty, when this brave man was attacked by the Jaintias he first fled to Roha and then down to Jagi from where the Lalungs the adherents of the Jaintias chased him down to Kajolimukh and executed him. Thus the last king of the dynasty that was set up by Vaidyadeva of Bengal met with his doom at the very place where the first invader from Bengal Mayan had established his first city.

#### (d) THE KOCHES :—

But the Bhuyans were not destined to enjoy peace for long. A great power rose in the northwest part of Goalpara at Chikina in the person of *Viswa Singha* of Viswa Singha, a Bodo chief of the Koch race, in 1515 A D and within a short time he established a vast Kingdom massacring the Bhuyans right and left. Some of the Bhuyans resisted and they were killed, others submitted and were kept as vassals while some left the country and took shelter either in the Muhammedan kingdom in Bengal or in the Nowgong District where, one of their groups, the family of Devidas—the leader of the Bhuyans brought by Dharmapala—was left undisturbed owing to the geographically advantageous position occupied by his dominion. In this lucky family of the Bhuyans was born Sankar Deva in about 1487 (1449 ?) A D—the most critical time in the cultural life of Assam.

A newer element had entered Kamarupa by the eastern gate in the form of the Tai invasion and the various chiefs who had settled in different kingdoms in the north and the east after the catastrophe of 1130, were being shaken to their very foundations with whatever remnants of the old Kamarupi culture they had. Kamota and Kamapur had been ruined and were being further



Hussain Shah's Mosque, Rangamati, Goalpara.



Metal Urns with Persian Scroll work, Gauhati.



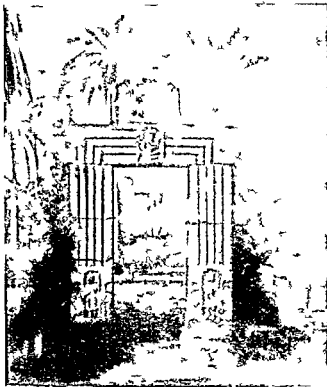
smashed by frequent Muhammedan invasions and Koch vandalism. Noagong at the junction of these invasions from both sides still retained something of the purest Kamarupi culture having had a ruler of the ancient Bhauma Pala dynasty till recently with orthodox Brahmins and high class people of other Hindu communities; and the Bhuyans having had migrated from Karouj and Kamota only a few generations back still retained the culture and traditions of those countries. A kayastha by birth, a ruler by inheritance and a Sakta by family religion,

kings left no vassal king in any of the kingdoms they conquered to keep alive and nurture the germs of the ancient culture of those kingdoms. The whole area was a desert without an oasis from the cultural view point.

In the meantime, Viswa Singha of Koch Behar was succeeded by his son Naranarayan. Biswa Singha had been a Saivite being initiated into that cult by Kali Chandra Bhattacharyya, and he got his sons—specially Naranarain educated at Benares. Influenced by a galaxy of highly educated and cultured men who had gathered round Naranarain from Bengal and Kamota, he gave a fresh lease of life to the political, social, religious and literary activities in his kingdom. In 1546, he led an expedition against the Ahoms as the resurrector of Hindu culture. He proceeded first to North Lakhimpur evidently expecting support from the inhabitants of the erstwhile independent Hindu kingdom. But he was sadly disappointed, for the Brahmins of that area took an active part against his army which was miserably defeated in the battle of Pichalagarh on the bank of the Pichala river near Narainpur, and was compelled to retreat pell mell cursing the Brahmins of this area as of savage origin, having no regard for cows or the holy thread.

The heart of the farsighted reformer Sankar Deva was completely broken, and he left the country with his people along with the unfortunate army in a boat down the Lohit and settled at Barpeta in the Koch Kingdom. Here he met with the remnants of the incarcerated Bhuyan families who had now sunk their differences with the Koches and were living happily as friends and helpers. Sankar Deva was offered Chieftainship over Tanti Kuchi near Barpeta, but he thankfully declined it. He set himself heart and soul to the furtherance of his mission in this favourable atmosphere and eventually gained an unassailable monarchy over the mass mind in the whole country in the religious, social and literary atmospheres. All that was pure Kamarupi, all that was best in Kamota and all that was good in other parts of India, were synthesized by this master mind for his countrymen in his literary works, songs and dramas, and he is, to this day, the unchallenged and the unassailable ruler over the Assamese mass mind.

Naranarayan had not given up his ambition, and in 1562, he came again with a stronger army well prepared for all eventualities and dealt a crushing blow at the Ahom king, but as a result of the treaty which the latter sued for, he annexed to his



Gateway to Temple Jajur Nowgang

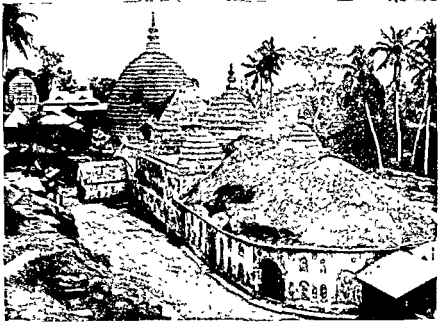


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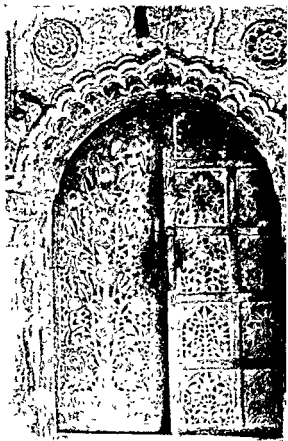




Kamakhya Temple, Gauhati.



Way to Tara Temple, Kamakhya Hill, Gauhati



Wooden Door, Kamakhya Temple.

kingdom only the portion of the north bank upto the modern town of Tezpur, and took as hostage a large number of young-men of the Ahom noble and royal families to his court. These young men were impregnated with ideas of Hindu culture, and on their return back to upper Assam, Durga Pujah was performed with great eclat on the bank of the Namdang river near the Ahom capital.

Towards the fag end of the glorious reign of this champion of Hindu culture of Koch Behar, his nephew Raghu Deva, the son of his brother and general Chila Rai, partitioned his share of the estate, and with a new capital set up at Barnagar, began to rule over the eastern kingdom of Koch Behar from the Sankosh river in the west, to the Bhoreli river in the east. After the death of Naranarayan, his son Lakshminarayan ascended the throne of what was then the western state of Koch-Bihar ; and since then the rulers of the two sister states continued to be constantly at logger-heads resulting eventually in the invitation of the Muhammedan ruler of Dacca, who first came as an ally of the western state, and then turned out to be the master of both the states. Muhammedan immigrants and Muhammedan officials were settled and stationed all over the country and a Hindu Zemindar—Satrajit of Bhushana of East Bengal was given an estate at Sual Kuchi in the Kamrup district. This hold however, was very short-lived in the area under Assam proper, for, the Ahom King, quite alive to the impending menace to his kingdom in the near future, took immediate measures and drove away this foreign element to the west of the Monas river though the task entailed great exertions.

There had been so many frequent changes of political authority in the area of Assam from Dhubri to Gauhati about this time, that the common people became indifferent to party or communal war-fare, and they considered their salvation to lie only in peaceful and amicable living with their neighbours so much so, that when any ruler made any temple or mosque, the list of permanent *Paiks* or attendants included Muhammedans and Hindus together, and they both worked harmoniously and received their usual doles from these religious institutions.

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# Chapter XII

## THE EASTERN AREA.

The eastern part of the glorious empire of Kamarupa which was deliberately neglected by Vaidya-Deva, the successful warrior but incompetent administrator-general of the King of Bengal, **Mush room states** by killing the emperor but not taking charge of the empire, received a sudden shock to her political, social and religious organisations. Mushroom states grew up under various chiefs who either claimed to have carried in their veins blood of one or the other of the old royal families, or were powerful officials in the old regimes or were mere upstarts with the power to command a following either of the local people or of some organised hill tribes. These rulers constantly fought with one another for reasons of self interest and their reigns were mostly nothing but a dreary record of personal valour, brutal murder and heinous abduction.

The rich, the educated and the learned Brahmins who had extensive land grants from the previous kings lingered on precariously for some time only with the copper plates as proud but valueless **Chaos.** mementoes, till they were compelled, for the safety of their lives and honour, to run away to safer zones, leaving even the last traces of their past glories to the mercy of white ants, only to be unearthed at some future date by some chance archaeologists. The sky-scraping temples which once resounded with the singing of Vedic hymns and dances of Devadasis lay forgotten till they were taken care of by rank vegetation and attended to by earthquake tremors. The whole place, once a bustling centre of hundreds of devotees, assumed the haunted appearance of the region of the dead and the unseen 'æpos'. Most of the evacuees migrated westwards to Kamota and only a fraction of them was thrown ashore by the waves of Chaos on to the foot-hill area on the north-west. There they were reorganised by a resourceful Kalita leader, eventually establishing the Habung Kingdom, and some how maintaining the germs of the ancient Kamarupi culture like an oasis in the desert.

About this time, the incarcerated Buddhists from other parts of India, being harassed by the Turks found a safe shelter in this part of **Buddhist** the country. They infiltrated through Bengal and settled **immigrants** in the hill areas. Though disorganised, they started

propagating to the people a form of religious idea made attractive with magical cures of diseases and other ailments. Thus they took religion more as a means of living than a mission. Already a hot bed of Salvism, Saktaism, and Buddhist Tantricism, the field was ready for this debased form of religion to germinate the seeds of what are now the secret societies of Rati-khowa, Tamul-nokhowa and Gopidhara. Newly fledged chiefs who were extremely zealous for culture by principle, but miserably poor to judge or assimilate it, found the mystic cult highly appealing to the taste. Something of the real old civilisation mixed with the savage practice and sauced with supernatural magical demonstration of immediate practical benefit made up a dish palatable to every body who cared anything for religious order. As a result, a kind of sensationalism and sentimental vagueness occupied the mind of the rest of India, and by an intellectual speculation, this country was looked upon as a land of dangerous witch-craft. A state is stated to have existed in a certain part of the country inhabited only by women, governed by a woman ruler, with the help of her women ministers and soldiers, and any male stranger unknowingly stepping into it, sapped to death. Another state is said to have existed in another part of the country, inhabited by a peculiar type of human beings specially designed by God with only one leg to hop about and with ears as large as winnowing fans.

Nor were these fantastic stories mere nursery tales to lull a child to sleep. In 1337, the 1,00,000 strong cavalry of the valiant Muhammad-

*Witchcraft.* Shah perished to a man in this land of witchcraft; and

when a second army was raised, not a single soul would step beyond the border of Bengal into this dreaded land of black art. The cultured people of the city possessing the seventh wonder of the world heard this story with rapt attention from the learned author of *Alamgirnamah*. Even so late as 1530, Guru Nanak, the father of the valiant Sikh community, had the bitter anguish of finding his brave Punjabi servant Mordana converted into a lamb before his very eyes, by a woman of this country, who could as well reconvert the young man to his natural anatomical shape according to her personal and private needs. The faithful private Secretary of the great religious preacher diligently recorded this sad incident in his memoirs, perhaps as a warning though without any effect, to the followers of his great master against future entry of any of their progeny into this horrible country.

Such was the unfortunate state to which the major portion of the once renowned Kamarupa Empire, the glowing jewel amongst the eastern states of India was deliberately thrown by the rash and tactless act of Valdya Deva the over-zealous general of Kumar Pala, the king of Bengal,

### (a) THE MORANS

A small kingdom comprising more or less the present Dibrugarh subdivision was occupied by the Morans who became independent when the Bhauma Pala dynasty collapsed. The Morans were very likely a remnant of the ancient Austric Moria clan intermixed with the Bodos. They were really the Mei-Morias (Mei-mi=men, people), and were later on known as the Maya-Morias or the Moa Morias. It has been endeavoured to interpret the term as heaving reference to *Maja*, the occult art or to *Moa*, a kind of fish; but it is really a corruption of the austric Mei Moria. As stated before, the portion of the country under the occupation of the Morans, was considered to be the apex of the head of the mother country according to the conception of the Austrics. The Sanskrit word for head was "*Mastaka*"—and the word was pronounced locally as "*Mahtaka*";—hence the country was known as Mahtak or Motak country. No systematic record of their rules or nature of government is available, but it appears that they were a warrior race with strong determination, and the spirit of vengeance remained ingrained in their blood for generations. Whether the whole area was ruled by one chief or by different chiefs in different small areas, is not easy to ascertain; but it is a fact that when the Ahoms came to this country, their first targets for attack were the Morans whom they crushed easily by making the women folk partners of their bed and the male folk hewers of wood and drawers of water. Though subjugated, the Morans never forgot the insult, and at the down-fall of the Ahom rule—about which more will be said later on, the Morans played the most important role feeding fat the grudge which they had nurtured for generations.

### (b) THE VARAHIS

During the long reigns of the kings of the Varaha Pala dynasty many enterprising princes had an admixture of blood with the Bodos, and thus a race of children of Varaha Pala fathers and Bodo mothers grew up, and was known as the 'Varahis'. Their males took



Bala Bhairava, Kamakhya Hill Rock.



Kali, Na-Bhanga, Hojai, Nowgong.



Sombeswari Durga, Sree Suryya Hill Rock, C

Bodo girls as wives, but were reluctant to give their daughters to Bodo youths, and thus they maintained a kind of race superiority.

When the Pala dynasty was ousted, an enterprising young man of this Varahi race—Babhru-Vahana by name, organised a big following of the Varahis and the Bodos and established an independent kingdom with his headquarters at Ghughuragarh, some-where to the north-west of Dibrugarh. His son Chandrahas extended the kingdom towards the south and established a second subpost in the Majuli area, known as southern capital or Dakshinpat. Ultimately, the main capital was shifted—to near about present Simaluguri and the kingdom comprised a portion of the present Sibsagar district and a portion of the Majuli area. The King was of the Varahi race, but the minister-ship was given to a man of the pure Bodo race; and at the time of the coronation, the crown on the King's head was put by the Bodo minister.

With such a coalition government, the culture was invariably of the mixed type, and on a hillock near the capital was installed the stone image of Vishnu mounted on the bird Garuda in a brick built temple. The image was popularly named as 'Charaideo' or the Bird-God. When the Ahoms came to Sibsagar, their chief Sukapha was highly impressed with the decent mode of living of the Varahis and first contracted friendship with the King—Thakumutha, and showed great reverence to the tutelary deity 'Charai-deo'; and then gradually usurped his throne. The sanctity of the temple and the hillock however, was retained for ever.

The poor king fled to the north bank of the Brahmaputra with his followers and first settled in the eastern part of the present Darrang district, where he established a capital which was named *Bolom & Halem*. Brahmapur, on the bank of a stream which was named Brahmajan. A lake on the Daffa hill from which the stream came out was named Brahma Sarovar. These names are still retained in slightly distorted forms as Bolompur, Bolom Nadi, and the lake with ruins of a brick and stone built temple on its bank is still in existence. 'Brahma' is the supreme divine energy of the highest Hindu philosophy-Vedanta, and the equivalent Bodo word for Brahmapur was Halalam; and the headquarters of the Bodos in the neighbouring area are now known as Halem.

The capital was then shifted to further north-east and it was named Vishwa-Karmapur, the city of the Architect-god, which after degenera-

tion into Vishpur has now taken the form of Bihpur or Bihpuria & Behali Bihpuria. The parallel Bodo town on the bank of the Brahmaputra was Bodo Jyoti, which is now known as Bordutti. Being troubled by the Kalita Kings who were then ruling in the North-Lakhimpur area the Varahi capital was shifted to the north west on the slope of the Daffla Hills and was named Brahma Tezpur. The parallel Bodo town to the south on the bank of the Brahmaputra was given a synonymous name Bathou Halali or Bahalali,—which is now known as Behali.

The remains of the vast and well fortified city of Brahma Tezpur with ramparts built with boulders and cut stone wide and deep moats on three sides and a big lake in front, filled with ruins of many stone temples and palaces and a stone built well are still visible on the Naksa parvat—18 miles to the north of the Ketela Tea Estate on the bank of a tributary to the Barganga (Bargang) river. The samples of the peculiar architecture and sculpture developed by these people—with the idea of ancient arts still lingering in the mind with degenerated workmanship, may be seen in the compound of the Manager of the Ketela Tea Estate who has taken great pains to bring down these valuable samples from the inaccessible jungle to the plains. The name of Brahma Tezpur is still retained in the name of the head quarter town—Tezpur—of the modern district of this area,—Darrang.

The current belief that Tezpur is an Assamese translation of Sonit pur (Tez=blood=sonit), the capital town of the Asura King Vana is without any logical or historical back ground. The present name of the district—Darrang is borrowed from the Dafflas or the Bhutias whose main Duar or pass for coming to the plains from the hills lay along the course of the Barganga river, and they called it 'Duar ganga' which after corruption to Duaranga has assumed the present form—Darranga or Darrang. A similar pass to the west in the present Mangaldai Subdivision along the course of the Rowta river which has a sacred lake or Kunda (now known as Bhairavi or Bhramari Kunda) is still known as 'Darranga' near Udalguri.

Here, in this Brahma Tezpur, during the reign of Virhas (1375-1385), a prince of the Kamota royal family established a city at Pratapgarh (now occupied by the Pertabgarh Tea Estate). Party feeling cropped up in the royal court—the King married his only daughter to a Bodo youngman of an ordinary family. This was against all customary canon, but the king had been impressed with





Bodo-Varahi Sculptures from Stone Pillars of Naksa parbat Ruins, Daffla Hills,  
North-East of Tezpur.



the bravery and intelligence of the youth, and made him his minister. When Pratap Singh invaded the Varahi kingdom, the Bodo group headed by the son-in-law was against meeting this powerful enemy in the battle field, while the king was ready to stake his life. As a result of this difference the son-in-law and minister Virochan fled with his party of Bodos to the south bank, while the King with his followers faced Pratap Singha and was killed in the battle.

Two Varahi chiefs—Pokhora and Lokhora accepted vassalage under Protap Singha. Pokhora remained in the old city which is now covered over with jungles and Lokhora's town is now known as Lokra. Lokra—the headquarters of the Assam Rifles. A group of the Bodos and the Varahis who belonged to the brave king's party migrated to the north-west of Gauhati and established a colony which was named Chikla by the Bodos and Brahma by the Varahis. The latter name still survives as Boroma.

The sculptures of Brahma-Tezpur clearly show that the Varahis were fond of songs and music with the accompaniment of drums, flutes, and large cymbals; and that Brahmins with the sacred thread on the breast and the pig-tail-like tuft of hair on the head ministered to their religious needs. Buddhist monks were also present in the city. Worship of snakes and *Sijju* trees was not unknown. The usual gymnastics were wrestling.

### (c) THE KALITAS

Several suggestions have been put forward about the origin of the Kalitas—who are still a powerful and important community in Assam.

*Origin.* A man in the lower grade of the society has a tendency to be classed as a Kalita, and the proselytising system marks the Kalita as the highest grade caste second only to the Kayastha.

Suggestions have been put forward to link the Kalitas with a certain Aryan group supposed to have migrated to Assam long before the Aryan invasion of India. The other suggestion connects the Kolutus—the founder of the Kulu Kingdom of Kashmere in the fourth century B. C. with the Kalitas of Assam.

The Tamil word 'Kallu' means stone, and Kal-taton means the stone-mason. It appears probable that Kalta and Kalita are distortions of Kal-Taton—meaning, firstly, the stone-mason and then in general term the artisans connected with temple building. The mason, the carpenter,

the iron and copper-smith, the potter and the cobbler—all fall under the same category of Kalitas

After the fall of the Pala dynasty the most wealthy and powerful group of people in the country was that of the temple builders who came mostly from the Deccan side and were settled in this country. They were comprised of the Hoihoyas, the Andhra Kakatiyas, the Chollas and the Duvarajas, but the majority of the society consisted of the artisan class who were called the Kalitans. These people organised themselves under a leader who belonged perhaps to the family of the princess whom Purandar Pala married, and established a kingdom in about 1132 A. D. in the north eastern part of the country. The city was named Bhismak-nagar in memory of the city of this name in Berar, mentioned in the Mahabharata. They carried the traditions of the epic period of their original homeland and attributed them to their newly established kingdom. Thus, the tradition of Rukmini, the daughter of Bhismaka, the King of Vidarbha (Berar) who was kidnapped by Sri-Krishna, came to be associated with this part of the country.

While these people gradually consolidated their power, the capital was shifted further south and was named Sodhoya-pur on the north bank of the Brahmaputra river and the town on the south bank opposite the capital was called the Sodhoyaghat. Sodhoya-pur is now known as Sadiya, and the ghat is now known as Solkhoaghat. What the significance of the word Sodhoya was or what it meant in Tamil or any Deccanese language is not known.

The kingdom extended to the west upto the Subansiri river and included the present North Lakhimpur Subdivision and a portion of Habung Majuli—the richest paddy growing area—which the Bodos called Habang or vast land (Ha-land, Bang plenty, vast). The kingdom was called Habong or Habung and the people were generally known as Kaltas or Kalitas.

It is not possible to get any detailed account of the various kings of this brave dynasty, but tradition supplies the names of Suvali, Padmanarain, Mohendranarain, Premnarain and Joynarain. The last named king probably was on the throne in 1338 A.D. When Ibn Batutah on his way from Delhi to China and back through Assam, passed through the glorious kingdom of Habung of which,—according to the Moor traveller—the ruling king Zienna had effected such an improvement that both the banks of the river—that could be likened only to the Nile (Nahre Arzaf=rivet deep) were full of shops,

bazars, factories and flourishing villages. The waters of the river within the kingdom used to be so congested with merchants' boats that beating of drums was resorted to by boatmen to guard against collision. Evidently, trade with China and Tibet on one side and Gauhati and Bengal on the other was maintained by the Kalitas.

By birth expert artisans in masonry, carpentry and metal work, and laborious and expert agriculturists by habit, it was no wonder that these people naturally effected all-round improvements social, religious, political and industrial in their kingdom of fertile soil. The ruins of the temples in the jungle-covered areas to the north and the north-east of the present Sadiya town at Dobang, Dewulpant and Tameswari further testify to the glories of the people of this period. The architecture and the sculpture were naturally of the Pala type.

Joynarain was succeeded by Keshovanarain who again was succeeded by Ramchandra in 1375 A.D. This unfortunate king being hemmed in by invasions from two directions—from the north-west along the Subansiri by Viravara alias Vikramadhwaja the Sootia king, and from the west by Vikramadhwaja the Varahi king of Bihpuria, in which he had several reverses, fled away to some unknown destination, leaving his people to entertain a vain hope—even to this day—that he would return after gathering fresh strength at some future opportune moment. But that moment never came; the king got himself attached to the Dafflas and established a small kingdom with a brick built city—named Mayapur on the top of the hill about 10 miles to the north-west of the present Harmati tea-garden, and never returned to his people. His wife—about whose exquisite beauty the Dafflas still carry a tradition—however, came down to the plains—being disgusted at her husband's degraded mentality, with her two little sons—Mayamatta and Nagamatta. But the country had been reorganised by one Nandiswar and the throne had gone to a different family. The princes did not get much support from the nobility,—they did whatever they could by personal efforts. Mayamatta was given a chieftainship in a portion of the Majuli area with his headquarters at Ratanpur, the western end of the fortification of which city now occupies a position of great reverence in the hearts of the modern Assamese Hindus, being associated with one of the four main religious centres of theirs—Garmur (end of the ramparts).

Nagamatta got a similar state to the further west along the bank of

the Brahmaputra river in the present Darrang district—where inspite of the Bodos he somehow upheld his position and built a temple of Siva. This still bears his name—and is known as Naga Sankar—situated about four miles to the South-east of Jamuguri. Nandiswar who had reorganised the Kalitas, soon defeated the enemies and brought back peace once again. His son Satyanarain and grandson Lakshminarain in their turns fought bravely against the Sootia menace that kept on harrasing the Kalitas from time to time and could maintain the traditional glory of the race.

The worship of god Vasudeva was very popular and a Brahmin of Kasyap Gotra, Narayan by name, got from Satyanarain a grant of eight hundred acres of land on the bank of the Dholi river in the North Lahimpur Subdivision in 1395 A. D. , and in 1401 A. D another Brahmin Rabi Deva of Sandilya Gotra received from Lakshminarain a grant of about 260 acres on the bank of the Subansiri river for his learning and devotion to the god Vasudeva. But due to frequent war fare with the neighbouring people, education had suffered and the morale of the people had degraded to a great extent. The wise Brahmins, attached to the shrewd Satyanarain, evolved a simple form of the worship of god Narayan or Vasudeva for the ordinary people. This form could be managed by simply reciting stories eulogising the supreme power of god for the worldly benefit of the people without the help of a Brahmin and without going through the paraphernalia of scriptural rites. This was called *Satya Narayan Vrata*, and a merchant of Gauhati was surprised to find the rustic wood-cutters of this Habung country feeling complacence at performing this simple worship to their Supreme deity on the sandy beach of the Lohit river, while he was passing in his merchandise boat. This simple form of worship passed on to Bengal and after about a century Hussain Shah found it a very simple means of religious compromise between the Hindus and the Muhammedans by naming it *Satya Narayan Sinu* as a parallel to the Muhammedan *Tosha Sinu*. Two frontier head quarters were established—Narainpur in the south western end by Satyanarain, to guard against the Varahis, and Lakshimpur in the north western end by Lakshminarain, to check the Sootias. Both these names are still associated with these two stations, though the location of Lakshimpur—the headquarters station of the present North Lahimpur Subdivision has moved at present several miles to the south west.



Surya Kal Ganesha Ru ns of Tam eswar Temple



Ter acotta plaques Tamreswa Temple Sad ya Font er

The Vasudeva temple at Kolabari, and the ruins of temples at Mangnua and Laluk were originally the works of these reigns.

These kings had their ministers from the Kayastha community. The Kayasthas—whatever might have been their racial origin, for their special gift of the brain, had been veteran politicians, diplomats and court officials in almost every kingdom in the east, at least from the sixth century A. D. Vaskar and Avanti Varman had Kayastha officials; the Senas of Bengal had Kayastha ministers; the throne of Kamota was usurped by a Kayastha minister; and the throne of Lakshmi Narain, the Kalita King of Habung, was taken possession of by his Kayastha Minister Samudra when, the latter died. Samudra's son Monohar—who succeeded his father had only a daughter—Lakshmi whom he bestowed on a young man who claimed to have had the blood of the ancient Solar dynasty of Oudh in his veins. This Solar union produced two sons,—Santanu and Sumanta. But they darkened the fate of the country by quarrelling for the throne. Ultimately, they apportioned the country between them into two kingdoms—Sumanta took the eastern part with Sadhoya, and Santanu ruled over the western portion with Narainpur as headquarters.

Degradation had crept in amongst the Kalitas after the downfall of Ramchandra in 1357, and further bad luck was thrust upon them by an unlucky Ahom queen who, due to court intrigues, was banished by her co-wife and left adrift on a raft in a state of pregnancy in 1397 A. D. A kind-hearted Brahmin of Habung who by chance caught hold of the raft became the god-father of the child that was born. When this boy went back to the Ahom country and regained his paternal throne, the family of the Brahmin god-father along with his other kith and kin were taken to the Ahom country where they gained power and wealth from the king. Gradually, migration of job-seeking and favour-hunting Kalitas to the kingdom of the rising Ahoms made the dwindling kingdom of their race still more weak. Taking advantage of this weakness—which became more prominent due to fraternal quarrels, the Ahom King Suhungmung—who adopted the diplomatic Hindu Surname—Swarganarain, marched on to the kingdom and annexed it to his territory in 1512 A. D. Santanu fled away to Nowgong area; Sumanta first accepted vassalage to the Ahom King, but at last had to follow the course of his brother. In the new area, the people of this royal family had to live with small holdings

being known as the Bhuyans after the designation of such land-lords living in that area at the time.

Thus the last repository of the ancient Hindu culture in Kamarupa was ransacked by the Ahom King whose own racial culture however, was soon overshadowed by the culture of the newly vanquished race; and this, in the long run brought the down-fall of the Ahoms.

Thus again, two classes of Bhuyans sprang up in the Hindu society of Assam:—first, the Kayastha immigrants from Bengal who were granted feudal chieftainships by Dharmapal of Kamapur, and the evacuee Kayasthas of the royal family of Habung who were self-created chiefs of an independant nature. Though in social status, the former pretend to claim superiority over the latter, in historical and racial status, there is perhaps no sense in making any distinction.

#### (d) THE SOOTIAS (CHUTIAS)

A section of the Bodos, who lived originally in the neighbourhood of the Swat lake to the north of the Himalayas and to the east of the great Manos lake migrated to the south along the **Original Home** course of the Subansiri river that joins the Lohit river to the north-east of the present North Lakhimpur Subdivision, about the middle of the seventh century A D while the Kings of the Varman dynasty were ruling Kamarupa. They were termed Swatias by the people of Kamarup, and from this, the present term Sootia or Chutia has come into use.

They were divided into four clans; and they lived in the frontier hilly area by the Subansiri river under twelve Chiefs. The Varman King won over the chief of the Pator Goya clan and **Patons** appointed him as a liaison officer to keep the Sootias on friendly terms. This chief lived with his people near the Mlechha capital to the east of the present Tezpur town in a place now known as Sootea. Later on, a Sootea Chief was appointed also as an ambassador to the neighbouring state of Jaintia, and at a much later date when the Varman dynasty collapsed, the then Sootia ambassador—Krishak who had already contracted friendship with the ruler of Jaintia migrated to that country and after marrying the princess, came to rule her land. His progeny ruled for many years in that part of the country including Sylhet, and the Patons in Sylhet now are mere cultivators and dealers in charcoal.

But the other clans of the Sootias did not improve much till after



the fall of the Pala-dynasty. Birpal, a general of the former regime organised the Sootias then living in sixty different villages in the hilly area on both sides of the Subansiri river and raised a strong army to regain the lost empire of his race. But his high ambition could not reach the desired goal and he remained content with his Kingship over the Sootias in a hilly kingdom. With his superior knowledge, culture and generalship he soon improved this kingdom to a high order and introduced Hindu culture amongst the Sootias. The temple of Kuvera—the Hindu god of wealth with an image of gold, adorned the hilly city on the Sonagiri hillock, and Kuvera became the State God—specially when gold particles were found abundantly in the sand of the Subansiri. This was in 1194 A. D.

Encouraged at this example, two more powerful men of the Pala regime Bhadrasen and Nyay Pal established two little kingdoms in the hills organising the Tribes in these areas, but the Sootias were better organised and their next King Ratna Pal easily crushed these two upstarts and extended the boundary of his kingdom. Brahmins and artisans from the old country were taken to and made to settle in this kingdom, and apparently many of the Kalita Kshatriyas got high official posts. The capital was renamed Ratanpur either after the name of the ancient capital of the Kalchuris of the tenth century A. D. in the central provinces or from the richness of the country in gold. The king maintained cultural relation with Kamota and Bengal, which he further strengthened by marrying a princess of Kamota and sending his son to Bengal for education. Tanks, roads, bridges, buildings and temples were constructed in large numbers all over the kingdom.

A new and peculiar culture evolved. The Sootias believed in the Almighty father *Kundi* and the Almighty mother *Mama*, and the Hindu goddess Kali was now adopted as their daughter under the caption *Kechai-Khaiti* (raw flesh eater) being propitiated only with human blood. Hindus accepted *Mama* as *Matri-Malanti*. The Buddhist-Tantric goddess Tara was also granted consideration, and by her association with *Matri-Malanti* and *Kechai-Khaiti*, a new powerful goddess *Ugratara* began to play a very important role over the mass mind.

Vikramadhwaja Pal (1360-1390) invaded the Kalita Kingdom and after inflicting a crushing defeat on Ramachandra—who fled away, extended his Kingdom right up to Namdang in the plains of Sibsagar. An out post was established in the capital town of the Kalitas on the

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bank of the river which was named after the Almighty father as Kundilpani (now known as Kundilpani) But the Kalita kingdom was wrested soon afterwards from the hold of Sootias by the Kalitas who were reorganised by Nandiswar

Henceforward, frequent conflict with the kalitas and the Ahoms hampered the cultural and industrial development of the country, and atlast Swarganarain the most diplomatic and powerful Ahom King, first annexed the Kalita kingdom in 1512 A D to his dominion and then attacked the Sootias in the same year But it was a difficult job to crush these sturdy warriors who had occupied the hilly positions After several defeats, this tenacious Ahom king succeeded in 1523 A D in finally defeating the Sootias King Nitya Pal fought to the last with his 120 queens who apart from being the partners of his bed were also his helpful adjutants in the battle field To escape the disgrace of falling into the hands of the enemy, Nitya Pal and his chief queen Sadhani immolated themselves by jumping from the summit of the Chandangiri hill into the deep gorge below

The Sootia Kingdom was annexed to the Ahom Kingdom the Sootia nobles were disbanded and deported to different parts of the Ahom territory, the five year old Sootia prince Sadhak Narain was deported to Kabirali in the present Mangaldai Subdivision and the artisans were transplanted in the Ahom capital Some of the Brahmins and other high class Hindus came down to the plains and those who remained in the old kingdom tried from time to time to organise revolutions against the Ahoms, often times causing troubles to the latter, but every time being foiled in their attempts till atlast, the Sootia movement was finally crushed by the shrewd Swarganarain by affiliating many Sootia nobles to the Ahom clans and winning over many others by grants of remunerative posts in the court

## Chapter XIII.

### THE KACHARIS

As stated before, the Bodos—specially the Hidimbials, also known as Dimachas, were called by the Hindus,—Kacharis on account of the fact that they lived in and controlled the foot hill areas Innumerable small

Chieftainships grew up during the chaotic period—each Chief posing as an independent King over his area all along the country from the south of Sadiya upto the north of Nowgong along the eastern belt.

The Bodo minister Virochona of the Varahi King of Darrang, who had married the King's daughter, and who due to his disagreement with his father-in-law fled with his followers from Behali **Brahmapur.** to the South bank of the Brahmaputra, established a kingdom in the present Nowgong District with his capital at Brahmapur—five miles to the east of the present Nowgong town on the bank of the Kullong river, and assumed the name Bicharpati-pha. The place is still known as Barhampur, and the ruins of some tanks, ramparts and two small brick-built temples are still seen in the Barhampur village.

His son Vikramaditya-pha shifted the capital further north-east to the slope of the Mikir-hills and installing the golden image of the goddess Durga in a temple in the newly established capital, named it Sona-pur. The place is still known by this name and is a flourishing Mikir village. Further to the south-east a second city was established in the plains near the present Tetelguri Mikir village, and digging a very big tank which still exists (now known as Padum Pukhuri), he installed the Vana-lingam Siva image in a temple on the bank of the tank and named the city Vanpur after the deity. The name is forgotten now. The third city in the west was established at Urdha-Ganga, which the Mikirs named Parok-khoa (Parok in the Mikir language means the Kacharis) meaning the land inhabited by the Kacharis, and the place is now known as Paro-khoa.

Various Bodo Chiefs in collusion with the Naga Chiefs of the east rose against Vikramaditya-pha, but with the superior knowledge in warfare of his people, he soon subdued them all and **Dimapur.** became the master of a vast empire. The capital was shifted near the Naga hills first to the bank of the Doyang river and then to the bank of the Dhanstri river. The first of these cities was called Kacho-mari, i. e. the city established for crushing the kings of the foot-hill kingdoms. The second city was established after completely subduing all the turbulent chiefs; and after installing a stone image of Vishnu—the Lord of Lakshmi—the goddess of wealth,—the city was named Lakshmindra-pur—the city of the goddess of wealth. The Dimachas, however, called the city Dimapur according to their old tradition. A big compound was enclosed with brick walls and

a triumphal arch, and inside the compound were installed a big stone triumphal monument and a lot of small stone triumphal pillars corresponding to the number of chiefs subdued.

The king lived in the newly established capital at Lakshmindrapur and his heir-elect was stationed at Vanpur as his Viceroy to administer the south-western area. A few triumphal pillars were installed at Kachomari also corresponding to the number of chiefs subdued from that city.

Durbars were held occasionally in the triumphal park, when the vassal chiefs would sit by the side of the triumphal round pillar assigned to each as a mark of submission while the king and the queen, and the Viceroy and the Vicereine, would sit by the side of the bifurcated stone pillars. The pillars were decorated with carvings of degenerated workmanship after the Brahma-Tezpur School. The image of Vishnu was carved after the ninth-century old Durga image at Deopani which was found near by. The triumphal pillars with the arch are still in existence, now known as Mush-room and Chessmen pillars; and an image of Durga has recently been found out near the Dimapur Dak-Bungalow while an earth mound was being excavated in levelling the ground for the extension of the Manipur Road station yard. A stone image of Ganesh—the elephant-tusked god was installed in the town established to the south west of the city Lambodar (another name of Ganesh) and the image is still in existence in that locality.

Varahi culture with the back-ground of Hindu culture reigned supreme, and the gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon were installed and worshipped in different parts of the empire, and the King had intercourse with the rulers of Kamota, Kamapur and Bengal.

Thus the kingdom was ruled peacefully for three more generations successively by Mahamanipha (1460-1470). Manipha and Ladopha (1485-1502); but the next king Khorapha (1502-1531) came into conflict with the Ahom King Swarganarain in 1526 and he was defeated. The Ahom territory was extended upto the east bank of the Dhansiri river at Golaghat. Khorapha's brother Khuntara occupied the throne in collusion with the Ahom King, but the heir-apparent of Vanpur—Derchong-pha soon recovered his paternal throne and made a strong move to regain the lost territory from the Ahoms. Swarganarain came up with a strong force, and after a fierce struggle succeeded in killing the Kachari King with his



Gateway (Brick built). Dimapur.



Gate Keepers, Royal Palace, Maibong, North Cachar Hills.

mother and getting a rich booty from the capital along with the beautiful queen of Derchongpha, whom he readily admitted into his harem.

For eight years, the Kachari kingdom was in a chaotic condition without any systematic rule, for though the Ahom King defeated the ruler, he could not rule over his subjects; and atlast, Madan Kumar, the son of the last king by his queen whom Swarganarain had taken to his harem, was installed as the King of Dimaapur as a vassal to the Ahom King. He was named Nirbhoy Narayan.



A new enemy sprang up in the ruler of the neighbouring Kingdom of Jaintia, who by establishing matrimonial relationship with the Ahom king acted as the latter's agent provocateur.

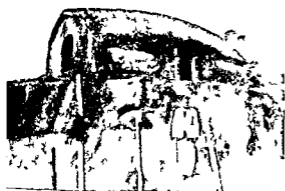
*Khaspur.* The Kachari king Biradarpanarain (1644-1682) therefore, contracted friendship with the king of Tipperah by marrying the latter's daughter, by which he obtained as *khas* or rent-free marriage dowry a portion of the Barak valley near Silchar in the present Cachar district. But this did not help very much and the next king Tamradhwaj Narain (1695-1707) sought the help of the Koch king by marrying the latter's daughter Chandra-probha. The Ahom King Rudra Singha did not give up his pursuit and sent frequent invading parties to the hill station of Maibong. At last, Tamradhwaj Singha migrated to the south and established his capital in the Barak valley which his predecessor obtained as a *khas* from the Tipperah king and named the city Khaspur. He now made up his mind to sink his differences with the Jaintia king and make common cause with him in order to stem the tide of Ahom invasion. The Jaintia king Ram-Singha and Tamradhwaj Narain fell victims to the strategy of the Ahom general Surath Singha Handiqui; both of them were taken as prisoners to the Ahom court.

Poor Tamradhwaj had no other alternative than to submit to the Ahom king and thus regain his throne, but the humiliation thus suffered, broke his heart and he breathed his last soon afterwards. His son Suradarpa Narain set himself to reorganise the people and improve the new capital. Brick-built palaces and temples were constructed in different parts of Khaspur and the kingdom was named Hidimba Kingdom. All the Kacharis living in different parts of Assam owned moral allegiance to the lord of Khaspur and the country upto the Jamuna river in the Nowgong district remained under his control. An out-post to the west side of the Jamuna river near about Dimapur marked the boundary of the territories of both the nations. On the west bank was the out-post of the Ahoms (Mohong) and on the east bank was the out-post of the Kacharis (Di-jua), and the place was popularly called—Mohong Dijua,—now a flourishing village inhabited by the Mikira and the Kacharis—at a distance of sixteen miles to the west of the Diphu Railway station. The area in the Jamuna Valley including the slopes of the Mikirs Hills was placed under the administration of a Deputy and the area was named "*Kachar Zilla*".

Brahmins and high class people from Koch Behar, Tipperah and



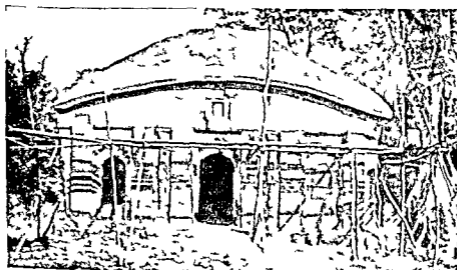
Chessmen Monoliths—Triumphal Pillars Dimaapur



Rock cut temple of Ranachand [Maibong  
North Cachar Hills



Snan Mandir Khaspur Cachar



Brick built Temple of Ranachandi Khaspur  
Cachar

Sylhet flocked to the royal court seeking employment and the king patronised them all. Immigrants from Sylhet, Bengal and other parts of India were also encouraged to settle in the newly established kingdom and cultivators were encouraged to encroach on the Tipperah territory to the south in the Dhaleswari valley which was a sloping highland and was therefore called Halia-Kandi (now known as Hailakandi). Haliakandi was at last annexed to the Kachari kingdom in 1736 A. D.

The shrewd Brahmins of Sylhet declared the king to be a pure Hindu by making him take a new ceremonial birth from the womb of a golden cow specially made for the purpose, which of course, they afterwards apportioned amongst themselves by pieces. But the old religious preceptors following the king from Assam did not give up their hold, and while the Vaisnava sacted book *Naradiya Puranam* was translated by Bhubaneswar Bachaspati (1733) into the spoken dialect, and the holy *Bhagavata Puranam* was read and explained daily in the royal court, the Dharmadi Guru propitiated the goddess Ranachandi by sacrificing a human being. Though both the religious heads were often-times at logger-heads, at last the Hindu Brahmins won. Temples of Siva were set up in different parts of the country. The rock cave temple of Hara-Parvati on the Bhubaneswar hill originally constructed by the Tipperah kings was kept up in glorious condition while the Vishnu temple at Chao-Bang (Subang) near Vikrampur, originally constructed about the seventh century A. D. by the Samatata Chief Lokenath, was allowed to fall into decay. Naths and Avadhut Atiths came and preached their religion and ultimately settled in the country. Rungrang in the eastern part of the country was for a long time a big business centre where the Kacharis, the Tipperahs and the Manipuris met together and traded in cloth, brass and bell-metal utensils, chillies, paddy, cotton and vegetables.

The capricious Deputy in the Jamuna valley perpetrated atrocities on the poor subjects; and once when the chief who had a peculiar whim of feeding his pet tiger cub with human milk was having his whim satisfied the Mikirs revolted, and the official who had laid his hands on Rangpher-be-Rangphi's breasts to milch her was put instantly to death with the stroke of an axe. Later on the Chief Akola himself was put to death near Haoraghat by his rebellious Mikir subjects most of whom in a body fled to the Jaintia Kingdom

for shelter. Thus perturbed, the Kachari King of Khaspur,—Krishna Chandra (1780-1813) sent his personal servant Kohidan to reorganise the administration in that area. This shrewd man quickly reorganised the country; but soon afterwards, proved faithless to his master and declared independence. This treachery was punished by murdering the treacherous Kohidan at Sildharampur, but his son Tularam kept ablaze the fire of rebellion for a long time, and the Jamuna valley was practically under his rule with headquarters at Maudanga. Most of the Assamese people who had taken shelter in this area during the Moamaria revolution in their country fled at this time to Sylhet, Jaintia and Silchar.

Due to the intervention of Mr. David Scott in 1829, a compromise was made by making a cession to Tularam of a certain extent of the country on the clear understanding that Tularam would never be called a king, but would use the honorific title of *Sensapati* (General). This being done, the British Government entered into a separate treaty with Tularam on 3rd. November, 1838.

The Manipuris to the east were the most uncertain neighbours. Sometimes they turned out to be very good friends, and while they were threatened by the Burmese they sought help of the Kachari King and often-times took shelter in his kingdom. But at one time, owing to internal feuds amongst the different claimants to the Manipur throne two Manipuri princes took refuge in Hailakandi and showed their gratitude to the host—Govinda Chandra (1813-1832) by taking charge of the Hailakandi area themselves. This conflict at last led to the intervention of the British Government who took over charge of the Hidimba Kingdom in 1832 A. D.

The Nowgong area came under the British Government in 1826 A. D. and Tularam's foot hill area—Kachar-Zilla in 1854 A. D. The latter area included portions of the North Cachar Hills, the Mikir Hills and the Nowgong district, and the headquarters of the British administration for this area were at Ganzong. But when the Hidimba country came under the British Government, a portion of the Kachar Zilla was added to it and the whole formed into one district replacing the name of the main kingdom by the name of its part: Hidimba Kingdom has since been known as the Kachar or Cachar district.

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## Chapter XIV.

### THE TIPPERAHS

As stated before, the Tipprahs or the Tipperahs came originally from the Bodo home in central Asia and are said to have first settled in India in a place near about present Allahabad. They preferred to call themselves the children of water goddess and were therefore known as the Tiphras or the Tippras and later on they became known as the Tipperahs.

The Tipperahs have a tradition that Druhyu one of the sons of Yayati the renowned king of the lunar dynasty of Delhi married a Bodo princess against his father's will and was disinherited. He preferred to live with his beloved in her hilly home amongst her relatives and his progeny became a ruling race. The ruling class of the Tipperahs claim lineage from the lunar dynasty from this traditional episode.

Whatever might have been the origin of the royal dynasty, it is traditionally believed that one Protardon came over to Assam and established a kingdom named Trivega in about 1900 B C with his headquarters on the bank of the Kapili river in the present Nowgong district and the dynasty ruled for full fourteen generations. What relations the kings had with the king of the Naraka dynasty is not known. Chitra Ratha—the twelfth king of the line is said to have attended the royal convention invited by Yudhishthira—the king of the lunar dynasty at Delhi. At the time of the fifteenth king Tripura mismanagement created disaffection amongst the subjects and the neighbours and a catastrophic famine further aggravated the matter the king was assassinated—it is said by God—and the subjects ran pell-mell to neighbouring states for food. His son Trilochan reorganised the state and married the daughter of the neighbouring Kachari king from

a new kingdom in the Barak valley with his headquarters at Kholongma somewhere east of Silchar. His son married the daughter of the king of Manipur and reigned peacefully over various races of the Kukis—the Haflongas, the Jaflongas, the Rungrangs, the Lungals, the Luchais &c. Rungrang—the village of the Rungrang Kukis above Jirighat was a great business centre and continued to maintain this position till recent years.

A kingdom in that remote time was certainly not what is understood by the term at present. The whole area was full of hills and jungles, inhabited by a very sparse population of various hill tribes. The Tipperah king had a kind of systematic ruling acumen and he occasionally subdued the delinquent hill tribes in certain hilly villages whenever an occasion arose; and perhaps, whenever, he wanted to conquer any village nobody could successfully stand against his superior and organised band of warriors. The Manipuri king in the East, the Kachari king in the North and the Jaintia king in the North-West were perhaps too strong for him. On this basis of calculation, the extent of the Tipperah kingdom comprised the whole of the present Kachar district, Lushai Hills, Karimganj, South-Sylhet and the Tipperah Hills.

Several generations ruled in this happy valley, but in about 490 A.D. the then ruling king Pratita picked a quarrel with the Kachari king over a hill damsel and was compelled to shift his headquarters to Dharamnagar on the bank of the Juri river in the present South-Sylhet Subdivision. The next king of great valour was Jujarupha who ascended the throne in 590 A. D. and after a successful battle with the Lika king of the hilly tract of Chittagong extended his kingdom to that area and established his headquarters first at Rangamati and then at Vishalgarh in the hilly Tipperah area. The latter place was subsequently named Tripura. Jujarupha is said to have introduced the Tripura era which dates from 590 A. D. This date is said to have been counted from the date of his accession to the throne.

What relation this or the subsequent kings had with the powerful Varmans of Kamarupa specially when Vasakar Varman became the lord of East Bengal is not known. Nor is there any trace of cultural influence of Kamarupa over these hill kings of Tipperah. They developed a mixed form of worshipping fourteen gods—Siva, Durga, Vishnu, Lakshmi, Saraswati, Kartik, Ganesh, Brahma, Earth, Sea, The Ganges, Fire, Cupid and the Himalayas,—all represented by symbols of small earthen mounds. They had their own priestly class—called the Chantai.

Though the seat of the king was removed far to the west, the various hill tribes living in distant parts of Cachar, Lushai hills and South-Sylhet owned allegiance to the king of Tipperah whom they considered as their Supreme Lord or Sarvo-Bhauma Emperor.

Srihasta, the king of Sylhet is said to have married Arundhati, the daughter of Hari-Rai alias Kirt or Adi-Dharma-pha of Tipperah.

According to the chronology of the Tipperah Royal family, Hari-Rai is the nineteenth generation upwards of Chengthumpha alias Singha-Tunga-pha whose date is known more or less accurately to be 1240 A. D. ; and on this basis, the date of Hari-Rai is estimated at 640-670 A. D.

According to the traditional description in a copper plate, which however, is not available for verification, the Vaidic Brahmins of Sylhet claim to have been brought from Central India from the court of Harsha-Vardhan of Kanouj and made to settle at Pancha-Khanda in the Karimganj subdivision by the Tipperah King Dharma-pha in 64 Tipperah Era which corresponds to 654 A.D.

This date coincides with the death of Bhaskar Varman and the consequent uprising of the Mlechhas in Kamarup, resulting ultimately in the downfall of the Varman dynasty. It therefore, appears probable that at this time of the political trouble in Kamarup, a batch of Brahmins migrated from Kamarup to the Tipperah Kingdom and settled at Pancha-Khanda. The suggestion is further corroborated by the fact that the copper plate grants of Bhaskar Varman to Nogar Brahmins have been found at Nidhanpur near Panchakhanda.

A copper plate found in Tipperah several years back purports to contain the decree of a gift of land to a Brahmin by a king named Loke-Nath in the Joy-Tunga province. Loke-Nath was of mixed origin: his maternal grand-father being the offspring of a Brahmin through a Sudra woman. Produsha Sarmah, the vassal ruler of the Subhanga district under Loke-Nath installed a temple of Vishnu and made an extensive landgrant to Brahmins on that account in a jungly area in Subhang, through the courtesy of Loke-Nath. The date of the copper plate is taken to be 644 A. D.

The paramount ruler over Loke-Nath was Jiva-dharana Deva, who though not very pleasingly disposed towards his subordinate ruler left him undisturbed due to the latter's extra ordinary prowess and organising capacity. Another copper plate recently discovered in the Kalyan village of Tipperah mentions a royal family—Sreedharana Ra,

Jiva-dharana Rat, Baladharana Rat—having a kind of autonomous power in a portion of Samatata.

Subhanga or Subang is a locality about 14 miles to the northwest of the present Silchar town in the Cachar district, situated on the bank of the river of that name. Jatinga is another locality north of Badarpur in the North-Cachar Hills situated on the bank of the river of that name. Subang falls into the Jatinga which again falls into the Barak river. It is therefore, likely that the area east of Karimganj from near about Badarpur to Rajnagar in the present Cachar district comprising a portion of the southern slope of the present North-Cachar Hills, formed the Joy-Tunga province and the present Barkhola area was the Subhanga district. The ruler of this province was under the suzerainty of Jiva-dharana Rat who again obeyed the suzerainty of the ruler of Tipperah.

Samatata being under the suzerainty of the emperor of Kamarupa at this time, the ruler of Tipperah was nominally under Kamarupa. When however, the Bodo uprising brought the downfall of the Varman dynasty in Kamarupa after the death of Bhaskar Varman, the consequent political chaos in the country afforded an opportunity to the ruler of Tipperah to become independent.

Due to the influence of the Brahmins who migrated either directly from Central India or from Kamarup, Hindu culture established its influence in this part of the country, but Buddhist *Buddhism.* preachers were also not idle. The Tibetan book—*Projna, Paramita* mentions a huge temple of Loke-Nath Buddha being located in the Joy-Tunga Varsha. A few centuries afterwards, a portion of the present Tipperah district was ruled over by a king who was Buddhist-Tantric in religion, with his capital at Patikera on the Lalmai Hills. Govinda Chandra alias Gopichand, the King of Patikera was defeated by Rajendra Chola, the King of Tanjore in 1025 A. D. Govinda Chandra himself became a Sannyasin (mendicant) under the influence of his mother Mainamati whose religious preceptor was Gorokh-Nath; but stone images of Vishnu have been found in different places of Tipperah—as having been installed under the patronage of Govinda Chandra.

*Pag-bsam-bjon-bjan*, a Tibetan book of Lama Taranath states that being molested by the Turks in central and northern India, many *Nan-gata.* Buddhists migrated towards the east and found a safe shelter in the land of the Kukis. A small state compr-



sing portions of modern Cachar, Tipperah and Assam—was named Nan gata and was inhabited by Buddhists and ruled over by Sundara-Hachi, a scion of the Buddhist royal family of Chittagong

The Badarpur hill is credited with the tradition of having had the palace of Pura Rajah—a vassal of the Tipperah king in ancient times and the Siddheswar Siva is said to have been his tutelary deity. The king is said to have died of snake bite, after which his capital collapsed. Lokenath's capital was probably at Badarpur and that of his vassal Produsha Sarma was at Rajnagar near Barkhola. Another king Madan Rajah ruled over this area after Pura Rajah. A big tank—14 miles south of Hailakandi town—contains a lot of bricks with dates 1490 Sak (1568 A. D.) engraved on them, with ruins of a Siva temple near by. The Bhuban hill to the east of Silchar contains rockcut temples and caves with stone images of Durga and Siva. These were the works of Tipperah kings. But this area along with the south eastern portion comprising the present Silchar and Hailakandi Subdivisions passed out of the hands of the Tipperah king partly as a cession and partly due to compulsion—as already stated previously, to the Kachari king.

Chatra Singha—a prince of Magadha left his own kingdom on account of internal troubles and settled in the kingdom of his friend, the king of Tipperah in about 1260 A. D. He was given **Chatachurah** a small area on the border of Tipperah and south Sylhet—in the south east corner of Adam ail and Du ail hills. This was mostly the hilly country—with Kukis as subjects. The kingdom was known as Chatachura and extended over the hilly area from Karimganj up to a portion of the Lushai Hills, the capital was Kanakpur. Chatra Singha's son Konok Singha succeeded his father, and his son Pratap Singha established a town—Pratapgarh in the hills of Karimganj. Konok Singha's daughter Santipriya was married to the prince of Sylhet (cousin of Gaurgoyinda) and Chapghat area near Karimganj was awarded as a dowry.

When however, owing to various political turmoils Tipperah went off under the British Rule and so also Cachar, the Kuki chiefs in the hill areas still considered the ruler of Tipperah as their **Kuki troubles** suzerain power, and they occasionally came down to the plains and harassed the inhabitants of those areas, they collected their revenue by forcefully taking away paddy and slaves.

In 1826, the Kuki chief Bustai killed several wood cutters near Protapgarh, and in 1844, another Kuki chief Lalchukla, took away

twenty human heads and six females from near Kachubari for performing the last rites of his departed father Lalhuriah. In 1862, Murchailal, the son of Lalchukla married the sister of Sukpailal—another kuki chief. Sukpailal wanted to present some female slaves to his sister and with that view kidnapped several women from near Adampur. In January 1871 he attacked Alexanderpur tea garden to the south of Hailakandi, killed Mr. Winchester the manager and carried away his daughter. This was too much, and the British Government raised two battalions in November, and invaded the Kuki area from two fronts at Chittagong and Hailakandi respectively. The Kukis were totally crushed and the eastern boundary of Tipperah was limited up to Dharamnagar and the Kuki area was included within the British administration, being divided between the Cachar and the Sylhet districts.

## Chapter XV

### THE MANIPURIS

The small kingdom of Manipur is situated on the eastern border of Assam on a table-land surrounded by hills on all sides. It has a very large lake—Logtak—about 8 miles long and 5 miles wide with floating islands on it.

In the ancient epic Mahabharata, the country is mentioned as "Meckley," and even in 1763 A. D., the King of Manipur used this term as the name of his kingdom in the document of treaty with the British Government. In the Allahabad stone pillar inscription of Samudra Gupta (4th Century A. D.), there is no mention of Manipur, though the neighbouring kingdom of Samatata, Dovako, Kamarupa and Nepal have been mentioned.

In old Assamese records, Manipur is known as the Mogloo or the Moglai country. In Sylhet and Cachar the Manipuris are called the "Mei-Moglais" in common parlance. The Burmese call the country "Cassey" or "Kassey".

On the eastern, northern and southern borders of Manipur are the Chin hills, inhabited by the Kachins or the Chins. **Moglai.** They call themselves "Zu" "Shu", "Lu" or "Lai,"

The people of southern China therefore, named this country Meung-Lai (Meung country) i.e., the country of the Lais or the Kachins. This Meung-Lai has been transformed into Moglai, Mogloo. Me or Mei means people, and Mei-Moglai means the people of Meung-Lai.

The big lake is called Kha-La (Kha-Closed water, lake; La-wide) **Meckley.** by the Chinese; and the country of the wide lake was called Meung-Kha-la, which has gradually been transformed into Mekhali or Meckley.

Kassey or Cassey is a general term used for the Kachins. The **Kassey.** coarse cloth used for covering the body during the cold weather is called the Kassey, or the Kheshe cloth meaning the cloth prepared by the Kachins, though it is generally prepared by the Manipuris.

The Manipuris are divided into two main tribes:—the Kha-la-**Kha-La-Chais,** chais, who call themselves Bishnu-purias, are supposed **Meitthis, Lu-Chais** to have been the first ruling race; and the Mei-this or Meitthis who call themselves real Manipuris are supposed to have been the next immigrants. Their language is distinctly different; the Khala-chai language is more akin to the Kamarupi tongue, and the Mei-this language is more akin to the Bodo-Chinese group.

Kha-la-chais evidently means the children (Cha. Chai) of the wide lake, and probably refers to the race of people who lived in the plain portion of the Manipur Valley; as opposed to the Lu-chais—the children of the Lu or the Kachins. Mei-this is clearly—people of *This* land, meaning the people coming from central China.

It is quite a reasonable surmise that the Austric Kha chais (Khasis) who had submitted to the influence of the Bodo and the Asura culture and stayed in the plains of Kamarupa when that country was over-run by those races, gradually turned into a mixed race with a mixed culture and language. At a later time, due to a fresh political turmoil in Kamarup, instead of migrating to the Khasi and the Jaintia hills where they were socially banned by the orthodox batch of their race, they migrated further eastwards and settled in the valley of the wide Logtak lake or Kha-la, and were known as the Khalachais.

There is a tradition recorded in ancient Manipuri Chronicles that

**Poirelton.** In ancient times, the country was inhabited by a wild tribe who knew not the use of fire or iron implements, and they subsisted on raw meat only. A party of adventurers led by one Poirelton came from the land of Death and settled in the north-west part of the country. They knew the use of fire, iron, gold and silver; they reared cattle, introduced cultivation, and played on musical instruments. Folk-songs perpetuate the memory of Poi-rei-ton even to this day. The new colonisers were the Mei-this or Mei-theis.

The Karens call the Burmese Paran, Payw, Pyaw, Pyu; and Tien or Ti is country or place. Parantien may have been corrupted into Poirelton referring not to a particular man, but to a band of people coming from a certain locality in Burma; as Kham-ti originally meaning the country (tien, ti) of Kham (gold, or seized) now refers to a tribe.

From euphonic similarity, the race name Mei-this is endeavoured to be linked with the Mitanni race, a section of the Aryans who flourished in Assyria in about 1400 B.C. and were expert horse-dealers Cassey is also similarly linked with the

**Maitrakas.** Cassite or the Kasi race of the same period. A further endeavour is made to link Mei-this with the Maitrakas who entered India from the west in about the 5th Century A. D. and established a kingdom in south-western India in Wallabipur,

The Maitraka interpretation is strengthened by the mythological belief that Atiya-Guru Shidaba, the supreme Almighty-Father of the Universe appeared before his seven sons whom he had created first, in the form of a Dead-Bull, floating down the Bijoya (Imphal) river, and the sons after cremating the Divine-Bull each took a portion of his body and preserved it as a sacred relic. Out of the blood that was spilt on the ground grew up grass and vegetables

The seven Clans into which the Manipuris are divided are Angom, Luang, Moirang, Khumon, Ningthouja, Khaba and Nangba; and each Clan still maintains the tradition of the particular part of the body of the Divine-Bull which fell to the lot of its lucky fore-father. This tradition appears to be the direct influence of the Mithraic cult that developed in the beginning of the Christian era in the south-eastern part of Europe, as an offshoot of Zoroastrism, in which the blood spilt by piercing the belly of the holy Bull was besmeared on the body of the devotee to expiate his sin and sprinkled on the ground to increase the fertility for rich vegetation.

The royal insignia of the Manipuris is the winged Lion, evidently a direct influence of the Chinese culture of the T'sang dynasty. Again, at the time of the coronation, the King sits on the head of a wooden snake built for the purpose. The second royal insignia is a Snake. Recording of day-to-day incidents of a king's reign in a chronicle is also an influence of the Chinese Chao-culture.

The modern tradition of the Manipuris is borrowed from the great epic Mahabharata. The Pandava Prince Arjuna during his triumphal march fell in love with Chitrangada, the princess of the king of Manipur and begot a son by her. Ulupi the princess of the neighboring Naga kingdom was Chitrangada's friend. The Manipuris now claim themselves to be the descendants of Babhru-Vahana, the son of Arjuna through Chitrangada, and point out the Naga-Hills to be the kingdom of Ulupi's father the Naga king. But from descriptions recorded in the epic Mahabharata itself, it is very clear that the kingdom of Manipur where the father of Chitrangada reigned was somewhere in the south-western part of India, as after his romance in the Manipur kingdom, the Pandava prince went to Bactria for his next excursion. The father of Ulupi reigned definitely near about present Hardwar in the United provinces.

To honour the tradition now in vogue amongst the Manipuris about the heroes and the heroines of the epic, it may at best be said that the devotees of the original homes where these episodes of the epic took place migrated to present Manipur with the traditions, and transplanted their heroes and heroines in the country of their adoption.

A band of enterprising people of the Deccan known as the Talings either of Kalinga (Orissa) or of the Telegu country migrated east-ward as early as 543 B.C. and established a kingdom named Hsare-Kettara (Sree Kshetra) at Prome in Burma. About the same time, Abhitaja, a prince of the Koliya race of Northern Behar is said to have migrated east-ward as the result of a quarrel with the King of Panchala and founded the kingdom of Tagaung or Sankassa in Burma and established himself as the king. Even in the second century A. D. Adji-Saka, an adventurer of the Bombay Presidency migrated to the eastern part of the mainland and established a kingdom in the golden island of Java.

Buddhism of the Northern School (Maha-yan) was introduced into China in 67 A. D., and the scriptures written in Sanskrit and the Gupta

script were introduced into that country through Central Asia, and some might have passed to Burma through the ancient trade route passing through Assam and Manipur. Tablets with Devanagari script have been dug up at the site of Tagaung, Pagan and Prome in Burma, and a coin in the same script dated the 2nd century A. D. (164 Sambat) has been discovered in the Aheibam village of Imphal—the present capital town of Manipur.

Tibetan Shamanism or Devil Worship crept into China and Burma; Tantricism crept in over the Patkoi range and the Hukong Valley and through Manipur. The Nagarjuni-kunda inscription of the 2nd century A. D. mentions the existence of Buddhists in the Chin hills, the Chinese records of the 2nd century A. D.—as stated by Pelliot mention the existence of Great-Brahmins in Manipur and small Brahmins in the Hukong Valley.

Manipur was also quite close to Dovako and Kamarupa. The influence of these kingdoms was within her easy reach.

Most of the islands in the Eastern Archipelago with adjoining portions of the mainland present a vivid picture of a peculiar fusion of races and cultures of the east, the west, the north and the south. Apart from Archaeological finds, religious observances, cultural traits and anthropological features, the fusion of the Bodo, the Austric, the Aryan and the Dravidian is vividly manifest in every quarter of this part of the continent. Manipur being on one of the main land-routes of these migrations and lying in close proximity to these theatres of fusion of cultures and races, it is no wonder that the Manipuris should appear to be Mongolian by features, Chinese by culture, Aryan by tradition, Naga by observances and Mithraic by faith.

It is quite probable that the Khalachats were the first cultured race in possession of the Manipur Valley, and they were connected more with the neighbouring kingdom of Kamarupa than with other countries, and that is why their language is more akin to Kamarupi. It is also very likely that in very early times they were influenced by the Vishnu cult—either from Kamarupa or other parts of India, and they named their capital town as Vishnupur. The Meithis were the later immigrants. They were more akin to the Chinese or the Thais, and their language and habits are more Mongolian.

The Manipuris had till recently a peculiar script of their own. China had her own script from time immemorial; the Shans with the Chinese

influence at the back-ground developed six forms of written character among their various tribes living in small neighbouring kingdoms. The Meithis coming from that area and influenced by these cultures developed a script of their own.

As in Burma, inspite of the fact that Devanagari, Pyu, Talaing and Pall scripts had been in use for a very long time, Anwarta the great, introduced the new Burmese script in 1044 A.D., so in Manipur inspite of the Devanagri script which the Khalachais might have been using, the Meithis, when they came into power introduced the new Manipuri script. A lot of ancient copperplates and manuscripts are written in this Script.

The Manipuris are now all Vaisnavas following the Bengal school of the faith; but the influences of the various faiths that swept over their country or flourished amongst their neighbours have not fully vanished. Koubru, Senamaht, Thanjing, the gods of rain and thunder are still worshipped in the old fashion. The Lai-haroba or the god pleasing dance indulged in sex-appealing songs and emotions has not been toally forgotten. The Monkey God, Hanuman, has still a temple in the capital town.

#### Religion.

Coming to History, as recorded in old copper plates and manuscripts and preserved in traditions, Pankhangba is named as the first king ruling in Manipur in 34 A.D.; the next king Khowai-Tampak in 154 A.D. is credited to have introduced drums, cymbala and other musical instruments and greatly patronised the art of music.

Internal dissensions broke out in 400 A.D. while the Luang the the Khuman and the Moirang clans cut off connection with the paramount power and declared independence.

Koh-Lo-Feng, the formidable Tai king built up a vast Tai Kingdom by "overcoming the national Tai tendency to break up rather than coalesce". in 700 A.D., and his kingdom Nan-Hao, or Ta-Meng-Kuo in the Shan state was recognised by the Chinese emperor who established friendly relationship with him by giving to his son a princess of the Imperial house in marriage. The powerful Tai King concluded an alliance with Tibet, wrested a part of China and in 707 A.D. invaded Manipur. The Manipuri King Nao-Thing-Thong was defeated and the country passed into the complete control of the Tais for full ten years. This king sent an embassy to

#### Tai Invasion

China accompanied by dancers, singers and musicians of different nationalities of Assam, Manipur and Burma. They played on eighteen kinds of musical instruments of which the big cymbals of gun metal and one-stringed instruments were specialities.

The next king Khongtekcha (765-799) reorganised the kingdom and Manipur was freed from all undesirable elements. A copper plate of this king dated 721 Sak (799 A.D.) written in archaic Manipuri script starts with salutation to God Hari' and inculcates the worship of Siva and Durga for worldly gains. Full Brahmanical influence prevailed and the prevalent faiths in the neighbouring kingdom of Kamarupa where an image of Vishnu had been installed at Barganga at the foot of the Mikir Hills and images of Durga, Siva and Vishnu were being worshipped at Deopani at the foot of the Naga Hills crept in over the bordering hills along with the Kamarupi army whom the Manipuri king apparently requisitioned by establishing an alliance with the powerful emperor of Kamarupa of the Mlechha dynasty.

The Kamarupi soldiers settled in Manipur, and mixing with the khala chais controlled the affairs of the state for several generations. Their headquarters were at Vishnupur so named after the tutelary deity Vishnu. Their language developed into a mixed dialect separate from that prevalent in Manipur, and they were designated by a separate name 'Vishnu purias' (now pronounced as Vishnu priyas) to distinguish them from the Meis who came afterwards.

The khumon king however was completely routed in 821 A.D. while paramouncy passed into the hands of Yangba. This king entered into friendly and cultural alliance with Burma, and the Naga or Dragon worship introduced into Burma by the Burmese king Sao Rahan in 924 A.D. was adopted in Manipur. The dragon became the royal insignia of Manipur. Even now, the Manipuri king ascends the head of a wooden snake made for the purpose, at the time of his coronation.

Anawarta the great Burmese king (1044 A.D.) married a princess of the Leche king of Weasli very likely of the Pala dynasty of Kamarupa. He thoroughly reorganised and reformed his country, by crushing the debased Tantrics—the Aris, and replacing Maha yan school of Buddhism by Hina yan. The next Burmese king Alaungsithu married a princess of the small kingdom of Patikara in modern Tippera. The Manipuri king gradually lost outside help due to



diplomatic tactics of the Burmese king and to add to the troubles, the Khumons again re asserted themselves in 1163 A D though with disastrous results to them causing nevertheless a great loss to the king of Manipur

The Tais living in the southern part of China had established a vast kingdom from the early tenth century They were called the Twangs and were more Chinese than Tais, and in 1250 *Chinese Invasion* A D they penetrated into Burma and then into Manipur The Manipuri king Khumomba resisted successfully and the Tai Chinese contingent was captured as war prisoners and ultimately made to settle in Susa Kameŋ The soldiers were used in handicrafts and they turned out to be good silk producers They gradually married Manipuri women and in course of time became merged in the society Pottery, Bell metal work, carpentry and brick making got an impetus through them

Though spared from the ravages of Kublai Khan who did not proceed further beyond Pagan in Burma, after sacking China and the Shan states in 1272 A D—Manipur was for about two centuries involved in a kind of civil war The Moirangs and the Angoms continued giving troubles from time to time

Khamba, a prince of the previously routed Khumon royal family fell in love with Thoibi—a Moirang princess and the tie would have been *Khamba-Thoibi* to the political advantage to the Moirangs, Khumons and Angoms, but the brother of the Moirang King foolishly resisted the idea on purely personal idiosyncrasies The final result was tragic not only to the young lovers but also to the Moirangs and the Angoms who were crushed by the king of Manipur in 1432 A D

The king of Manipur now established friendly relationship with the Tai King of Magaung in order to ensure support in case of further *Vishnu-Worship* emergency, and got Kobo Valley ceded to Manipur as a friendly consideration in 1475 A D The Manipuri King Kayamba also got a present of a holy disc of Vishnu from the Tai king, which the latter probably procured for his friend from Sumatra or Java This holy disc was installed in a temple in the palace and worshipped The Pao-bin Brahmins who belonged to the erst while inimical Vishnupuria group were requisitioned to administer the divine rites to the holy disc.

The pathetic love episode of Khamba and Thoibi forms the subject

matter of popular ballads in Manipur, and the dresses of the heroic lovers are still preserved as a sacred relic in Moirang

Thus secured the next king Kabomba (1523-1541 A D) made an endeavour to extend his Kingdom and conquered a portion of the Cachar district which was then under the Tipperah King The Ahom King Suhungmung (Swarganarain) of Assam was busy at the time with the Kacharis whom he had just driven out from their capital at Dimapur, and fearing troubles which might arise out of the probable coalition of the Kacharis with the Manipuris, he hastened to present the Manipuri King (Chaomen—according to Ahom Buranji) with Khukdang—a princess of the royal Lan Mukhra family along with a substantial dowry. The King of Manipur reciprocated by sending to the Ahom King a similar present of a princess and valuable presents

Chalamba (1544—61 A D) married a princess of Kamrup, and Muangba (1561—79 A D) entered into matrimonial alliance with Burma, Tipperah and Assam These unions had a definite cultural effect on Manipur and the Vishnu cult got a further impetus Khagenba (1579—1651) installed a Vishnu image in Yengbam village, and it is still known as Khagenba Vishnu Temples and palaces were built with bricks by architects brought from Tipperah and Koch Behar Guns were cast in bell metal in 1627 A D Khagenba introduced the Meithei as the court language in place of Vishnupria or Kalachai language

The King's brother Shalungba being aggrieved at his brother's treatment fled to Sylhet, and with the help of a contingent of Muhammedan soldiers raised there, invaded Manipur His knave attempt however, was foiled and all the Muhammedan soldiers were captured and taken to Manipur and made to work as labourers and artisans They gradually took local wives and gave rise to a new race of Manipuri Muhammedans—with Islam as the religion and Meithei as the mother tongue These people were responsible for introducing the habit of smoking tobacco in *hookah* in Manipur

The Moghul emperor sent three ambassadors to Manipur in 1662 A D, and the King of Manipur also reciprocated Thus gradually Manipur became connected more with India than with Burma This gave an impetus—supported by Royal favours—to unchecked immigration of job-seekers and fortune hunters

to Manipur from Bengal, Behar and United provinces. With them came a wave of better culture and civilisation. The incarcerated Brahmins of North India flocked to Manipur, and at once declared the king to be the direct descendant of Arjuna, the hero of Mahabharata and by an intellectual speculation, identified the country with the land of Chitrangada, the heroine of the epic period

Gopal Singha ascended the throne of Manipur in 1709 A D, at the age of 20, and assumed the surname Garib-Nawaz, a honorific epithet given to him by the emperor of Delhi. He had a tradition of a Naga lineage, being the son of a Naga concubine of his father, or being brought up in the house of a Naga chief along with his banished mother. This scandal made him touchy and he ordered burning down all historical records old or new in the country. He was however, a very powerful king. He snatched a portion of Cachar District from the Tipperah King, and successfully led three invasions against Burma. A lot of Burmese artists were taken as prisoners to Manipur, and they developed wood, ivory and bell metal industries and also introduced the distillation of liquor. Chengmai—named after a place of the same name in Burma, inhabited by the Burmese prisoners became the centre for brewing liquor and it still maintains the tradition of the industry.

Santadas Babaji, an enterprising Vaisnava of the chaitanya school of Narsingha Akhara of Sylhet, crossed the hills of Jirghat and reached Manipur and within a short time bewitched as it were, the whole population including the king, with his melodious Kirtana bearing on the life story of Sree Krishna and Radha. He took a Manipuri *sevadsi*, opened a centre in Imphal, and initiated the people by hundreds to the faith of his master. Vaisnavism became the Royal faith, Navadwip of Bengal, the birth place of Chaitanya became the holy place for pilgrimage, and Bengali language in which most of the religious songs and the holy books were composed became the subject for intense study. The Meithi alphabet was gradually replaced by the Bengali Script.

Either due to connection with Assam or due to the influence of the old Tsang dynasty of China, Garib-Nawaz introduced—like his contemporary Rudra Singha of Assam, a peculiar law of inheritance that entitled all his sons to occupy the throne one after the other, and the son of the last occupier of the

But the resourceful Joy Singha raised a strong army with the help of his son-in-law the Ahom King, and himself led them through the Roha route and easily regained his lost throne in 1768.

**Rasa Dance.** Though troubled occasionally by the Burmese necessitating short exiles on four occasions, his reign for fourteen years was marked by the construction of the temple of Govindaji, study of the holy Bhagavata in original Sanskrit and the introduction of the famous *Rasa* dance amongst his people. In 1792, he was in a position to send a contingent of Manipuri soldiers to the help of the Ahom King Gaurinath Singha to quell the Moa-Marias.

Joy Singha died in 1799, and his five sons—Harsha Chandra, Madhu Chandra, Chaurjit Singha, Marjit Singha and Gambhir Singha repeated the same process that their father and uncles had practised in their bid to occupy the throne; and after repeated **Hailakandi** murders and exiles due to various intrigues, Marjit **Clique.** Singha, the Manikin was at last installed on the throne of Manipur by Bodaw Paya, the King of Burma, in 1812.

Chaurjit fled first to Cachar where he got the Hailakandi Sub-division as a reward from his host. The next Burmese King Bagyidaw felt insulted when he found Marjit absent in his coronation and homage-ceremony, and promptly deputed his general Maha-Bandula to drive out Marjit Singh. The refugee found shelter in Hailakandi where he became reconciled to his brother and erstwhile enemy Chaurjit and took possession of the whole of Cachar district driving out their kind host—Gobinda Chandra—the Kachari King. Govinda Chandra fled to Sylhet and after vainly trying to invoke the British aid appealed to the Burmese King for help. Manipur was now under the Burmese, and Cachar formed the subject matter of intrigues and cliques of the Manipuri royal brothers. A large number of Manipuri immigrants settled in Silchar and Hailakandi areas. Gambhir Singh now came to the fore front, Chaurjit was driven away to Sylhet, and Marjit was left with Hailakandi. The next step of Gambhir Singh to oust the Burmese from the parent land only induced the latter to send an army to annex Cachar, and the Burmese army proceeded up to Dudpatil near the Silchar town.

During this confused period, the British came to the rescue. Chaurjit Singh in Sylhet tendered his interest in Cachar to the East-India Company, Gobinda Chandra and Gambhir Singh were won over by promising support, and the combined **British help.**

efforts resulted in checking the Burmese in January 1825

Gambhir Singh was installed on the throne of Manipur with the Kubo Valley added to his Kingdom Govinda Chandra got his Kingdom of Cachar back But the British help in both the cases meant a certain degree of permanent influence which ultimately led to their paramountcy over these kingdoms, the kings depending for their support on the army supplied by the British during emergency

With a footing gained in Manipur, the British thought of a plan to open a road from this new settlement to the nearest district of Sibsagar in Assam which had already become a stronghold of theirs A reconnoitre party consisting of Capt Pamberton, General Jenkins and Capt. Gordon started from Manipur in 1831 to find out the possibility of opening a road through the Naga Hills, but they were opposed at every stage by the Nagas who inhabited these Hills To help his new allies Gambhir Singh led an expedition against the Nagas in 1834, and brought the whole country between Manipur and Assam under complete submission to himself In commemoration of this victory he installed a stone slab dated 1754 Sak 10th Magh (1833, January) with the dragon insignia and the foot prints of Gobindaji inscribed on it,—on a hillock in the centre of the present Kohima town

Gambhir Singh opened a road from Imperial to Assam, which he agreed to keep open on condition that the British Government would agree to cede a part of the forest below the Naga Hills to him, where he would establish a colony and a fort at the northern end at Nichuguard (Nichu lower, grad fort)

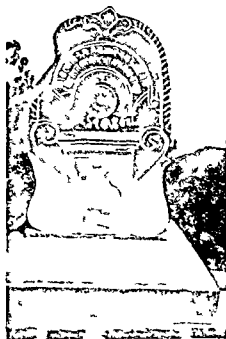
The untimely death of Gambhir Singh in 1835 however, made the arrangement fall through though the road opened by him helped the British a good deal in later years in conquering the Naga Hills, and Manipur, and lately in reconquering Burma and driving out the Japanese.

The trouble did not end here After the death of Gambhir Singh in 1835, the Burmese King protested to the British against inclusion of Kubo Valley to Manipur alleging that the Shan King who had ceded the area to the Manipuri King in 1475 had really been a tributary to Burma Major Burney scrutinised the records and supported the Burmese claim

Chandra Kirti reorganised the country, accepted a British Political



Boundary Pillar of Jantak King Jamunagaon near Doboka



Victory Pillar of Manpur King 1754 Sak or 1832 A.D. Kohma Naga Hills



Burra Burri (Siva Durga) worshipped by Lalung Kampur Nowgong



Umkhra—Tiger God Mahamaya Hill Mkr Hills

Agent in Manipur in 1835; restored trade with Cachar and Sylhet and encouraged songs and music. The Phagua or Dol-yatra festival was introduced as a national festival in a grand scale. The British system of education was introduced in Manipur by establishing a High English School in 1878; the King got the decoration of K. C. S. I. due to the help rendered by his troops to the British during the siege of Kohima in 1879.

But the court intrigues continued unabated. The next King Sura Chandra and his brothers Kula Chandra and Tikendrajit and the redoubtable general Thengal—were involved in a nasty turmoil of court intrigues—which ultimately compelled the British to take charge of Manipur in 1891, placing Churachand—as the Rajah on the throne.

## Chapter XVI.

### THE JAINTIAS AND THE KHASIS.

As already stated in a previous chapter, a section of the Austric people who originally migrated from a state in China were called the *T'sin-taing* or *T'sin tien*, and they were ultimately known as the *Zyntien* or the *Jaintias*, and their Kingdom was named *Jaintia*. They were closely associated with the other group of their race known as the *Kha-chias* or the *Khasis* who lived in the state containing the holy shrine of *Kameikha*, and the state was named *Kamei-tien* and later as *Kamota*. When *Kamrupa* was overrun by various tribes and races from time to time bringing in new order of things, a batch of the *Jaintias* and the *Khasis* migrated to the top of the neighbouring hills. They maintained a kind of aloofness in their hilly resort living in different batches under a headman over each batch, and all the headmen again owned allegiance to the chief headman of the *Jaintia* group. The *Khasis* were a religious sect looking after the holy shrine, while the *Jaintias* were the ruling class; and therefore, the chief headman or the *Rajah* was selected from among the *Jaintias*. The post of a headman over a group was elective,

where as the post of the Rajah was hereditary, and the Rajah was a female, the youngest daughter of the previous ruler inheriting the throne

What political relation these hill people had with the rulers of the plains of Kamarupa is not known definitely, but it appears that the Varman kings had nominal suzerainty over them and an official of Kamrupa used to be stationed in Jaintia as an ambassador to keep up cordial relationship.

There was trade relation with the plains of Kamarupa specially for rice, silk and betelnuts. Betelnut was a commodity of daily use amongst the hill people and its use was a national habit **Gauhati** This however, did not grow in the hills, and was available in abundance in Kamarupa. The great mart where this commodity was catered to the hill people was named by them as *Kuat hats* or Betel nut mart, and this has since been known as Gauhati

What was the name of the main kingdom is not known Each area under a chief was known by a particular name, and the two major areas were known after the races that inhabited them **Name of Kingdom** The fact that the Khasis and the Jaintias were matriachal, and the chieftainship of the chief head of Jaintia or in other words the throne of Jaintia was delegated to a woman, the people in the plains and in other parts of India designated the country by the general name of *Nari Rajya* or the woman's kingdom The *Markeyanda Puranam* written about the 5th century A D mentions a kingdom named Vijoy-Pur situated on the top of the hill to the east of Pragjyotishpur, and it is stated in the same book that the kingdom is believed to have been established by Vijoy who was the son of a Kshatriya king through a hill damsel of the Himalya area. Even now Jaintia is known as Prag-Vijoy Rajya.

The only ruler of Jaintia about whom tradition keeps alive a more or less systematic record was Ka Urmi Rani who was married to Sindhu **Krishak** Rai, the ambassador of the emperor of Kamarupa, and the issue of the union was Ka Urvara, a daughter. This daughter fell in love with the next Kamarupa ambassador Krishak and married him Krishak claimed the blood of the ancient lunar dynasty running in his veins from the traditional belief of his forefather being the offspring of Parikshit, the emperor of Delhi through a Bodo damsel of the area near about the Manos Lake Krishak begot a son through



his Jaintia wife who was the heir-apparent to the throne, and he effected many improvements to the administration of the country and modified the code of inheritance by replacing the youngest daughter by the eldest son. This was an open defiance to the time honoured custom, and the emperor of Kamrupa suspecting a dangerous and far reaching effect of this change, atonce recalled Krishak to Kamrupa never to return again to Jainta. Krishak's son Hatak however, ascended the throne of Jainta when his mother died, thus bringing in the new order of a male occupying the throne of Jainta for the first time.

The progeny of Krishak through Hatak ruled in Jainta and Sylhet for several generations, as will be described later on, and they were known by the general term-the Pators. The mythological story of the original home land and the origin of the ancestry of Krishak linked with the tradition of the original home land of the Sootias as already described before, lead to the suggestion that Krishak was a Sootia. The traditional belief amongst the Dəori Sootias of Upper Assam that one of their clans the Pator-Goyan migrated to the south with a powerful leader and were not heard of since, lends further support to the suggestion.

The move set on foot for the general improvement of Jainta included the programme for religious development and an endeavour to convert Jainta into a second Kamarupa. As a prototype of Ka-Mel-Kha which was the holiest shrine of the Khasis and the Jaintias, a similar shrine was established in the southern slope of the Jainta Hills, where a natural spring flowed round a rock. The rock was about three feet long and two feet wide with a narrow ridge running along the length on the top at one side, and the whole thing resembled in appearance the shoulder of a human being. This was named *Griva-Kamakhyā* and was represented as the shoulder of the Supreme Mother. Near this rock was installed a massive Siva Lingam and it was named *Hatakeswarat*.

It has already been stated before that Hatakeswara Siva was the tutelary deity of the Nagar Brāhmins who were brought from Central India by Mahabhuti Varma of Kamarupa to his country, and that the image was situated near Tezpur. It has also been stated that a certain Bodo chief probably of the Sootia race was the deputy of the emperor of Kamrupa stationed at Tezpur to deal with the Northern and the Eastern tribes, and that he took the lead of a movement against the

emperor of Kamarupa when Bhaskar Varma died, and then usurped the throne

All these facts lead to an irresistible suggestion that Hatak was an inhabitant of Tezpur area and that he was greatly influenced by the Brahminical religion of that place and himself became a great devotee to Hatakeswar Diva

It is a knotty problem to fix a date of Krishak with any degree of accuracy, but his progeny having had ruled in Jainta and Sylhet for generations, some of them even in historical time it is possible to fix only a tentative date Krishak's great great grand son Sree-Hasta, the ruler of Sylhet is believed to have had married the daughter of Hari Rai the king of Tipperah, and the date of Hari Rai is tentatively fixed at 640—670 A D. This will place Krishak at about 550 A D Kesava Deva, another king of Sylhet fourteenth generations downwards of Krishak is mentioned in the Bhatara copper plate as ruling in 4328 or 4128 Yudhisthira era corresponding to 1142 Sak (1227 A D) or 949 Sak (1027 A D) Taking thirty years per generation, this will place Krishak at 807 A D or 607 A D The last king of Sylhet who claimed himself to be the twenty fourth in the line of Krishak was ousted by the Muhammedans in 703 Hijra or 1304 A D. This fixes the date of Krishak at 584 A D

From all these facts it is probable that Krishak was an Official of Mahabhuti Varma, the emperor of Kamarupa (520—556 A D) Jainta owned allegiance to the ruler of the Kamarupa till the Bodo rising and overthrowal of the Varma dynasty, and then perhaps declared independence

Hatak married a prince of Kamarupa, and he was in due course succeeded by his son Guhak who also married a Kamarupi princess and was greatly under the influence of Hindu religion Hatak He got a stone image of Krishna and Balaram in their pose of killing the demon Kangsa, and worshipped it under the name Kangsa Nisudhana

Guhak had three sons and two daughters The eldest daughter Shella was his pet. The poor Girl was kidnapped by some ruffians one day while she was bathing in a lake on the southern slope of the hill She was rescued, and she preferred to lead the life of a religious recluse under the guidance of her father The place of occurrence of the sad tragedy was named after her as Shella,

and the locality where she passed the rest of her life as a nun near the port town at the southern end of the kingdom was named after her as Shella hat. The present town of Sylhet was the biggest port town for export and import of Jaintia and was within the jurisdiction of that kingdom. Near the residence of Shella a small market place was established for her facility, for as a nun she would not go far off, and this was called Shella-Hat. It is presumed that this name has gradually been transformed into Shil-Hat or Sylhet.

Guhak also renounced the world as a mendicant after the death of his daughter, but before he did so, he apportioned the kingdom equally amongst his three sons. The kingdom comprised the whole of the Jaintia Hills with their extensions over a portion of the present Sylhet district which in those days was like a vast sea in its major portion except some dots of high land in places

The eldest son Jayanta got the parent kingdom comprising the hills, the second son Gurak was allotted the southern plains with the port, and the third Laruk was given the South Western portion. These three kingdoms ultimately were known as Jaintia, Gaur-Sylhet and Laur.

It is not possible to get any systematic chronology of the rulers of Jaintia except references at random. Jayanta being cut off from the main shrine of Kamakhya in Kamrupa and also from the newly established Griva Kamakhya which was now included within the jurisdiction of Gaur Sylhet, he established another Kamakhya on the south eastern part of his kingdom on the slope of the hill near Kanaighat, and named it *Bama-Jangha pitha* or the Left thigh shrine and the stone emblem was identified as the left thigh of the Supreme Mother from its shape.

Though separated from the main empire of Kamarupa in practice, the three kings of the three kingdoms considered themselves yet as a part of Kamarupa, and designated their kingdoms as *Khanda* Kamarupa. Kamarupa being the most powerful kingdom in the Eastern part of India at the time, her culture and influence in some form or other could not but effect the neighbouring states

Jayanta's son Joymalla was a great athlete, so-much-so that he found pleasure in allowing an elephant to walk over his chest; and one day while trying his strength with a rhino caught fresh from the jung'e he met with accidental death. After that, there is mention of one Bancharu who was very keen in improving the

forests of his kingdom by planting trees and plants of commercial value; for, the forest produce of Jainta was one of the greatest attractions of the traders that flocked to the port of Sylhet from different parts of India. Honey, *Tejpat*, orange and Agarú were cultivated in abundance at this time.

About this time, Buddhist Tantricism had penetrated into Kamrupa and Bengal, and it easily found its way into Jainta over the hills from Kamrupa and through the port town of Sylhet. The latter place being a congested port where people from different parts of India and specially from Bengal flocked and stayed for business. The Buddhist merchants established a temple in that port town and installed a beautiful metal image of Buddha which they named as Shillo-Lokenath. Gríva Kamakhya was named as Gríva Kali, and the Jangha Kamakhya was named as Jangha Kali. Sylhet port became a hot bed of Buddhist Tantrics, and in their sacred books they mentioned this place as of immense sanctity second only to Kamakhya in Kamrupa. Bancharu was influenced greatly by this cult and he introduced the sacrifice of human beings in the shrine of Jangha Kali

Then there is mention of Kamadeva who was a great patron of Sanskrit learning, so-much-so that he got from his friend Bhojo Varma Deva of East Bengal (1090 A. D) a Sanskrit scholar Kaviraj Pandit and got an epic Vijoy-Raghaba composed for him. Kamadeva's son Bhímbal reigned only for a short period while an uprising amongst some of the vassal rulers of the hill area dragged him into a war in which unfortunately he was badly defeated. To shun the disgrace, he left the country in disguise while others thought that he was murdered. His throne was usurped by his Brahmin minister Kedsreswar Rai. This was in about 1120-30 A. D. when the political situation in Kamarupa was in a melting pot.

The family of the Brahmin kings who came originally either from Kamarupa or very likely from East Bengal ruled for five generations quite ably and peacefully introducing all ideas and customs of the Hindu religion amongst the hill people. Admixture of blood was naturally not stayed, and along with a mixed culture by fusion of the religious ideas and customs of the two people a mixed race also developed side by side

The last king Jayanta Rai had only a daughter Jayanti, and she was married to Landavar the son of the Brahmin minister Chandivar. This

**Sister's son.** young man had the depraved mentality of living openly with the Khasi made servant of his wife, and as the result of the conjugal quarrel, Jayanti drove him out of her palace. Landavar preferred in spite of all sorts of intimidation and cajoling to live with his fiance in her native village Huttunga, and begot a son by her. Jayanta Rai died about 1240 A. D., by an accidental fall from the summit of a rock near Muktapur, and Jayanti was installed on the throne, but this was objected to by one party as going back to the custom given up long since by the royalty of Jaintia. Agitations of parties started: one party approached Bhabananda the king of Gaur-Sylhet to take charge of the kingdom while the second party installed on the throne an old Sannyasin who was found one day sitting under the shade of a tree near the palace, identifying him by stress of imagination to be Bhimbal who had absconded a century ago. After a lot of agitations, Landavar's son through his Khasi wife was selected to be the rightful heir; for, from social consideration, the maid and companion of Jayanti was like her sister, and her husband having had accepted her as his wife, the hill girl was the legal co-wife of Jayanti; and the union of a Brahmin of the minister or of the Royal families with a native woman was nothing extra ordinary, rather it was common. Jayanti had to agree to the suggestion to the great joy of the Khasis and the Jaintias. The throne now passed on to a man of the indigenous tribal blood; and hence forward the rule of Jaintia throne passing on to the sister's son became the order of inheritance.

The name of this son was Bura-Gossain, a synonym of God Siva, but nothing more is known about his activities. After this, political changes of far reaching effects overtook the neighbouring kingdom of Sylhet; the Muhammedans took possession of that area. The empire of Kamarupa on the other side was being shattered to pieces: the Ahoms had come there as a powerful exploiter. During this period of turmoil all around, Jaintia somehow kept up her integrity but nothing about the rulers or their rule is known for about two centuries.

The next record of historical reliability comes to lime light from about 1500 A. D., and after that the rules of about twenty three generations are more or less borne by systematic records.

**Historical Time.** Parbat Rai reigned from 1500 to 1516, and he was succeeded by Maju Gossain. The old Rais originally Brahmin by caste

and then Ministers and Kings by profession were gradually merged with the Syntengs and the Khasis and developed a mixed race and mixed culture. The Rais or the Roys of the Khasi and the Jainta Hills still form the aristocracy of the country. The nephew system of inheritance being in vogue this mixed people perhaps manipulated the Royal families by careful admixture of blood. All the kings were pure Hindus in religion but the installation of the megalith at the death ceremony was honoured as the compulsory custom.

Bar Gossain (1548—1564) greatly improved the shrine of Bam-Jangha and installed the Siva temple at Rupnath near Muktapur, by the side Koch & Kachari of a natural rock cave which due to its lime stone structure had a lot of stalactitic formations easily interpretable with religious mythological suggestions. The capital town was shifted from Nartiang to its present site at the southern slope of the hill nearear to the holy shrines. The next king Bijoy Manik (1564—80) suffered a defeat in the hands of Chilarai the redoubtable general of the Koch king and had to pay a heavy annual ransom and agree to the humiliating term of minting the coins of Jainta without engraving the name of the king. Since then, the coins of Jainta were minted with an epithet—*Jaintasuara Purandara, Sivapadalamal Madhukara*, the Lord of Jainta bee to the honey of the lotus feet of Siva. Bijoy Manik then contracted friendship with Bijoy Manikya the king of Tipperah and of Megha Narsin the Kachari king of Maibong and improved his position as a powerful ruler. Dhan Manik (1596 1612) fell out with the Kachari king over the boundary disputes of the Lalung area, and in the conflict that ensued he was compelled to submit to and own vassalage of the Kachari king but maintained his position by giving his two daughters in marriage and his son Jasho Manik as a hostage to the Kachari king. When Jasho Manik ascended his father's throne still as a vassal to the Kachari king, he planned to avenge the insult by entering into a diplomatic relation with the Ahom king Pratap Singha by offering his daughter to the latter on the condition that the Ahom king would escort the girl from the boundary of Jainta. The route from Jainta to the Ahom territory passed through the jurisdiction of the Kachari king and the latter would not easily allow this Royal procession through his territory. The Jainta king played the game well, the Ahom king succeeded in taking his bride at the cost of the lives of a whole regiment but the wound was so gaping that the Ahoms took it as a national insult which they were determined to avenge at any cost, and

pursued it through generations. The Kachari king at last left Maibong and fled to Khaspur near Silchar, in 1706 A. D.

Ram Singh I (1694-1708) was a devout Hindu, but he had a complex of liking for fresh and beautiful women. He had given his sister Kamala to Tamradhwaj but Tamradhwaj's other wife **Ahom Invasion** Chandraprobha who was fabulously beautiful captured his imagination, and he put up a bait to the Kachari king to join with him in a combined attack of the Ahom territory, and invited him to a consultation at Mulagul, at the boundary of both Jaintia and Cachar. Tamradhwaj easily believed his brother-in-law, and while he came with his retinue in a boat along with the image of his tutelary deity Hedambeswari and met the Jaintia king in a friendly conference in the latter's boat, he found himself a prisoner of his guest and the Kachari king was carried to Jaintia along with the image of the tutelary deity. Chandraprobha sent a message of this treachery to the Ahom king Rudra Singha who at once sent a strong army under Surath Singha Handiqui against the Jaintia king for avenging the insult meted out to the Ahom king by meddling with his prey. The Ahom general found it difficult to deal with the Jaintias in the usual manner, and adopted a stratagem of putting forward a bait of offering an Ahom princess to the Jaintia king. The princess was alleged to have been sent by the Ahom king with the general to be given in marriage to the Jaintia king in the Ahom camp. The psychological complex made Ram Singh quite unmindful of any eventualities and he gladly accepted the offer and went to the Ahom camp accompanied by his prisoner friend Tamradhwaj Singha and the prince. When the party advanced the Ahom camp which was agog apparently with festivities the Jaintia king with his son and the Kachari king found themselves prisoners of the Ahom general, and they were straightaway carried in great haste to the Ahom king Rudra Singha who was at the time camping at Biswanath near Tezpur. The game was successful, dirty though it was, but it cost the Ahom general a full battalion which never returned to their country.

Totally broken heart, Ram Singh died in the Ahom court after an attack of small pox, but his son and the Kachari king were released and allowed to go back to their respective kingdoms as vassals to the Ahom king. The promise however was treated with scant courtesy as soon as the kings returned to their own capitals. The idol of

Jainteswari is now at Jorhat town in the Buri Gossari temple, and the idol of Hedambeswari is still at Jainta in the Jainteswari temple

All went on well for some time. When the Kachari administration beyond the hills in the Jamuna Valley slackened due to internal trouble, the Jainta king won over the Mikirs and extended his Jurisdiction over Lanka and also upto Jamunagaon near Doboka. The stone boundary pillar with the image of Kali engraved on it with an inscription in Bengali script was fixed in Jamunagaon reserved forest on the bank of the Jamuna river, and it is now in the small museum at Nowgong. Educated Brahmins from Bengal and other places were encouraged to settle in Jainta with extensive land grants to propagate education and religious teachings. Artisans were also encouraged to come over to Jainta and settle there. Buildings with specially made long and narrow tiles were constructed after the fashion of thatched house with pitched roofs, and temples in bricks were constructed in places. Trade with Sylhet in iron ores, lime, orange, betel leaf, chillies and ivory continued with great profits. The special qualities of *Pan* (betel leaf), *Pani* (crystal clear water of the rivers) and *Nari* (beautiful women) the three specialities of Jaintapuri formed the subjects of interesting gossips in other parts of India.

Though so closely situated for centuries together, the Muhammedan rulers of Sylhet who were well known for their aggressiveness did not encroach even an inch on the boundary of Jainta, which was only nine miles from the capital of Sylhet and sixteen miles from the capital of Jainta. The reason is not easy to explain, it was due either to the desire to leave the source of raw materials of trade undisturbed, or due to the dread of the particular animal the flesh of which was a savoury food to the Jaintas but a dangerous taboo to the Muhammedans. At last however, Alivardhikhan, the ruler of Murshidabad who was in administrative charge of Sylhet, planned a stratagem of marrying a sister of Bar Gossain II in 1740, thinking that the son born of this wife would be a Muhammedan in religion and legal claimant to the throne of Jainta. Fateh Khan, the son of Bhairavi Kuanri by Alivardhi Khan was born a bit too late, and when he came to Jainta to claim his maternal uncle's throne, he found that his uncle had a sister still younger than his mother, and her son had the legal claim. Anyhow, Fateh Khan remained at Jainta to serve his uncle as a faithful general and he was an acquisition, for trained in improved methods of warfare and the use of improved artillery, he imparted



better training to the troops of Jainta Fateh Khan constructed a mosque in the capital town very near to the temple of Jainteswari, and this gave an impetus to the infiltration of Muslim immigrants from neighbouring areas of Sylhet. Though the king did not raise any objection, his ministers saw to the future probable risks, and one night Fateh Khan was done to death by an assassin, and the mosque was demolished. There was a party faction for some time over this tragedy, the Chief of Khyrim went against the king, while the chief of Cherra sided with his master; but everything was at last set at rest by tactful manipulation.

Burra-Gossain and his queen Kasamati were initiated into the Tantric cult by Harekrishna Upadhyaya and at the fag end of his reign he renounced the world with his wife and they passed the rest of their lives as mendicants in the Kali temple at Jainta under the theological guidance of the priest Lilapuri.

Ram Singh II (1790-1832) was also a great devotee, and he constructed a sky scraping Siva temple on the top of the hillock at Dubi near the Shari bridge. The ruins are still in existence and the rest house with peculiar architecture is still in tact on the road side.

The British had come in possession of Sylhet first as Dewans in 1765 and then as masters after the decisive battle of Plassey in 1775. They left Jainta undisturbed and carried on trade of export and import with the hill people with great profits. In 1824, a treaty was signed with the ruler of Jainta assuring him of his independence and of help against foreign invasions.

The British got possession of Upper Assam as the result of the Yandaboo treaty in 1826, and then thought of a convenient road between Assam and Sylhet. The barrier was the Hill. The Khasi hills were divided into twelve states with a few more substates under the chief of each of these states. The main chiefs of the twelve staes owned allegiance to the king of Jainta and offered him an annual tribute of a goat, a few maunds of fried rice and chillies, some labourers for cultivation; and in addition, military aid at the time of any warfare in which the centre was involved was compulsory. David Scott however, made an arrangement with the chiefs of the Khasi Hills independently and started construction of a road from Rani near Gauhati to Bholaganj through Cherrapunji and Theriaghat. The work was started in 1827 and continued upto 1829,

when Tirat Singh, the chief of Nangkhlaw state saw to the probable after effects of this concession and struck a discordant note by killing three officers and 150 followers of the road construction party. Pitched battles continued till 9th January, 1833, when Tirat Singh surrendered and all the chiefs and sub chiefs were assured independence and undisturbed peace on their respective areas in exchange of the cessation of minerals, elephants, forests and other natural produces of their states on the condition of receiving half the profits accruing from these sources. The suzerain power was apparently left out of consultation in this important matter, and so was the Jowai state. Thus in the place of eleven states in the Khasi Hills leaving out Jowai, twenty five independent states were created by the British Government (1)

In the meantime, Hidimba kingdom (present Cachar) was annexed to the British kingdom in 1832, the sub kingdom of Cachar had already been ceded to Tularam through the intervention of David Scott in 1819, and now remained only Jainta.

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(I) Old states under the Jainta king :—

- (I) Hill states—1. Suttunga. 2. Nartlang. 3. Khyrim.  
4. Myllem. 5. Cherra. 6. Sabhar 7. Nartelang.  
8 Rambarai. 9. Nongkhlaw. 10. Nangbar.  
11. Nongspu. 12 Jowai.

- (II) Plains state—1. Jaintapur 2. Jaflong 3. Charikata.  
4. Faljur 5. Chatul 6. Dhargaon. 7. Panchbhag  
8. Araikhan. 9 Khyril. 10. Chaur.

New states as composed :—

- (I) Hill states—1. Bhowal. 2 Cherra. 3. Dwara.  
4 Nongtyrmen. 5 Jirang. 6. Khyrim.  
7. Langiong. 8. Langrim. 9. Maharam.  
10. Malaisohmat 11. Maodan. 12. Maoflang  
13. Maoiang. 14. Maolong 15 Maosanram.  
16. Marriw. 17. Myllem. 18. Nobosophoh  
19. Nongkhlaio. 20. Nonglewat. 21. Nongspung  
22. Nongstoin. 23. Rambarai. 24. Shella.  
25. Sohtong

- (II) Plain states.—Nil.

Chatra Singh, the Lalung chief of the Gobha state near Nowgong, who was a vassal to the ruler of Jaintia was alleged to have had sacrificed three human beings who were the British subjects of Gauhati before his tutelary deity Kali according to his time-honoured religious custom. The ruler of Jaintia was asked to account for this and hand over the culprits, though the culprit who had killed three officers and 150 followers were dealt with directly.

Ram Singh II died in 1832, and his nephew Rajendra Singh alias Indra Singh ascended the throne while yet a little boy. On the 15th March, 1835, Mr. Harry Inglis who had been very friendly with the king and the officials of Jaintia in connection with his trade in lime, went to the capital accompanied by Capt. Lister and a posse of soldiers. Mr. Harry had an easy access to the palace being a well known face, and when the young king gladly received the old friend with a smile and indulged in gossips with him, the noise of the soldiers looting the bazar reached the ears of the king, and while he was yet unable to ascertain the real cause of this unexpected troubles, he found himself a prisoner of his honoured guest. This was the most unexpected behaviour, and the officials and the soldiers ran to the armoury to bring their arms, while the king stopped them from indulging in unnecessary blood shed.

Young Indra Singh was taken a prisoner amongst the wailings and the gnashing of teeth of his loyal subjects to Sylhet where he was interned in the house of Babu Murari Chand Rai, a local Zemindar (after whose name the College at Sylhet has been named subsequently). Here the king was granted a chance to give up all claims in the plains area contiguous to Sylhet and remain satisfied with the state of Jowai, but he did not accept the offer, and remained satisfied with a personal allowance of five hundred rupees per month.

Thus the most ancient kingdom of Assam first established by a race of people coming from the north east part of Asia several hundred centuries before Christ was totally annihilated by a race coming from the north west part of Europe, in 1835 A. D.

## Chapter—XVII.

### The Mikirs, The Garos and The Lalungs

#### (a) THE MIKIRS

A small tribe apparently of the Bodo origin perhaps of the latest migration, live in the hills between the plains of the Sibsagar district and Naga hills. In their own language they call themselves Arlengs meaning men. The word Mikir may have originated from Mikiri, meaning hill people. In origin they may be a mixture of the Austrics and the Bodos. They are divided into twelve clans, but they were never of any account during the reign of any of the dynasties that ruled in Assam.

During the Hindu regime—most of the Mikirs must have been Hinduised and those who stuck to their old customs and faith continued worshipping the gods of their own pantheon from Hempu the house hold god, to Umkhra—the tiger-god and the priestly class Teron administered the services. There is scarcely any calamity or good fortune that has not got a presiding deity

When the official under the Jaintia King began to rule over the Mikirs, many Jaintia and thereby Austric customs crept in. The Matriarchal system of inheritance was adopted, the installation of a vertical and a flat megalith in honour of the dead with a pond excavated in front of them was introduced. The ceremony however was given the Hindu name 'Daha', while the sex appealing dance accompanied with amorous songs performed on the occasion by unmarried youths and virgins was called the Chuman-Kang Chao Mein Kajang<sup>1</sup> or the heavenly men's dance.

The Mikirs adopted various art and craft. The only weapon was made with well tempered steel. The Mikir Hill area being a good source of iron ores, they were good smelters. They made their own clothes. The males wore the loin cloth with long tufts projected on both ends decorated with cowries, they wore wide ear rings made of bamboos—evidently a Naga influence, the women folk wore decent cloth with black and yellow colour—influences of the Kachars and the Jaintias. The feathers of the long tail of the *Bhimray* bird (a bird with melodious tune), azure blue in colour is prized as the most valuable decoration for the turban of youngmen on festive occasions.

The elaborate ceremony observed during the 'Daha' in taking out the bone of the dead and then propitiating his spirit with wine, rice and meat attended with songs and dances is a mixture of Austric and Hindu cultures.

When the Ahoms came in power the Mikirs were not very much affected culturally but some chiefs near Roha were brought under the Ahom rule. Sarat Kumar either a Mikir chief or a Hindu who identified himself with the Mikir tried to lead an agitation against this move of subjugation, but he was treacherously exposed and murdered, though the Mikirs still believe that he will be coming back in time to relieve them of the bondage.

Before the arrival of the British, the Mikirs led a precarious life— one section was under the Ahom Chief at Roha, another under Tularam Serapati at Moudanga being oppressed by the Naga-oppression Nagas frequently, and the third section under the Jaintia king. There was still the fourth group between Golaghat and Dimapur, owing allegiance to none but strongly maintaining their position against the Nagas.

With the arrival of the British, along with the subjugation of the various ruling tribes, the Mikirs were automatically freed and they came directly under the British rule.

### (b) THE GAROS

The Garos, whatever might have been their origin appear to have been under the Jaintias for a long time and even now they are called the Garo Khasis in certain parts of the country. It is not unlikely that the Garos were originally the Gond tribe of the Austrics and then by an admixture with the Bodos they attained a separate identity— though in social matters they follow the Jaintias and the Khasi customs in a slightly modified form.

They follow the matriachal system in marriage and inheritance, and the soul of the dead is supposed to inhabit a timber monolith erected in his honour. The drum scooped out of the trunk of a tree is the familiar instrument and the gun metal gong from Tibet is the most prized property.

The matriachal system often times is carried to such an extent that the husband of the daughter has to entertain his widowed mother-in-law as an additional partner of his bed to safeguard the property against running into the custody of another man whom his widowed mother-in-law might choose as her fresh husband.

The Garos are good growers of cotton of short staple that grows abundantly in their hills, but they never excelled in utilizing it for manufacturing any garments. The male folk use a thin strip of loin cloth and the females use a very short and narrow skirt round the loins leaving the whole upper part bare. The only weapons they knew were the 'Daos', which they used for all purposes from household work to war fares,

The culture of the surrounding plains do not appear to have had penetrated into the interior of the Hills, and the Garos had all along maintained complete independence ruling their own areas in their own feudal system. Each village had a chief and several villages owned allegiance to a Rajah or Bunniah or Nakma. These offices were hereditary, approved by common consent, the claim of the oldest family in the locality having the first preference. There were four such Rajahs in the whole Hill.

The Garo Chief living in the Southern plain area of the Hills appears to have been ousted from his kingdom by Padmanava—the fugitive king of the Kapili Valley in the middle of fourteenth century, and he fled westward to Mymensing where he established the small kingdom of Susang which he sold afterwards to a Brahmin.

The Garos living in the areas bordering Goalpara, Mymensing and Rangpur districts as also the Garos of the interior came down to the plains to sell their cotton and chillies and purchase paddy, salt, cloth and other necessaries: and the rulers of the states exacted taxes from them. To deal with the Garos, each ruler used to appoint a Laskar—at every pass or duar. Often times, the fraudulent tactics of the merchants and the officers of the States, were retaliated by the Garos by chopping off their heads which were sold at a high premium in the hills—the price varying according to the wealth and position of the merchant or the officer.

Kasyapnagar (Later known as Karaibari State) and the Mechpara states being contiguous to the Garo Hills, the rulers of these two states vie'd with each other in exercising their influence over the Garos in order to get the benefit of the Garo cotton being brought to the markets within their respective states. During the Muhammedan period, the the ruler of Rangamati district did not bother the Garos and he left Mechpara and Karaibari as two buffer states between the Garo Hills and the only sign of allegiance that these two rulers had to show to the Mughal Emperor was to send each a present of a few elephant tusks annually.

These two rulers were in a manner independent, and when Bengal passed into the hands of the East India Company, they considered themselves unaffected. Suryyanarain (1740-76), the ruler of Karaibari attacked the Garos, burnt their villages and induced them to pay him tribute. His son Dharmanarain (1776-78)

The Lalungs, though of Bodo origin, were greatly influenced by Hindu culture and Siva and Durga were worshipped as Bura and Buri. The Goddess Kall was propitiated by sacrifice of human beings before her.

In 1564, Panteswar, the king of Gobha stood successfully against the Koch General Chila Rai. During the Ahom rule some Lalung Chiefs near Roha were alienated by the Ahom chief stationed at Roha from the suzerainty of Jaintia.

In 1834, Chatra Singh, the ruler of Gobha was alleged to have sacrificed several persons of Kamarupa before the Goddess Kali and this made the British interfere, and ultimately resulted in the annexation of Jaintia and thereby of the Lalung States to the British Empire.

## Chapter—XVIII.

### THE PATORS AND THE SYLHETTIES.

As stated previously, upto the time of Guhak—the whole of the Khasi and the Jaintia hills, the present North-Sylhet and Sunamganj and a portion of the present Maulvibazar and Habiganj Part of Kamarupa Subdivisions, were under the ruler of Jaintia and the kingdom was still considered to be a part of the Kamarupa Empire and was called '*Khanda-Kamarupa*.' Many Brahmins of Kamarupa came over and settled in this area, and a stone image of Krishna and Balaram in the posture of killing their adversary Kangsa called '*Kangsa-Nisudhana*' was installed on a hillock near the southern port—at the site now occupied by the Civil Surgeon's Bungalow in the present Sylhet town, along with Griva-Kali and Jangha Kali.

When Sylhet was separated from Jaintia proper, the influence of the Chyntengs and the Khasis of the Austric race could not touch its people, and the King with the people of his Pator-Chutia clan developed an independent culture.



The Mlechha Kings of Kamarupa built up an improved navy, and the Pators who came from Kamarupa with the Katvartas also built up a powerful navy to ply in the sea like areas in their kingdom. Nine big boats were built, some of which were two storied and were propelled by one hundred and twenty oars. The boats were named as Chali, Hali, Jilkar, Hakaluka, Makarasya, Chatali Damuria, Barua, Baral, and the deep lakes where they used to be kept moored when not in use derived their names from these ships—Chali haor, Hali haor, Hakaluka Haor, etc. (Haor=Saor=Sagar=Sea=big lake). These boats were used for trade as well as in warfare, and the Nine ships or *Nava Dingas* were the pride of the King of Sylhet.

The capital was originally at Borchola—five miles to the north west of the present Sylhet town, but was subsequently shifted to the bank of the Malini stream about seven miles to the South. But the Chief Minister was always stationed on a hillock near the port town for collection of taxes and duties and the hillock thus came to be known after the name of each minister when he was in office. At the time of Gudak, the hillock was known as Marbel tilla after the name of his minister Marbel Pator and at the time of the last king Gauda Govinda it was named as the Monaral tilla after the name of his minister—Monaral. The last name still exists. The hillock is now occupied by the Executive Engineer's Bungalow.

But the port town, as it happens to all important trade centres in the world—could not retain the pure culture of the ruling race—due to intermixture of various races and peoples who flocked there for the purpose of trade. When Jainta became a separate kingdom, she stood as a barrier to Sylhet against maintaining free intercourse with Kamarupa. The enterprising prime minister Marbel Pator managed to get a princess of Tipperah for Srihasta—the heir apparent to the throne of Sylhet, and henceforward the communication of Sylhet with the western part of India in matters social, religious and cultural began to increase.

Srihasta went on a pilgrimage to Allahabad and brought a Siva Lingam of stone from the *Akshoj vata* Shrine of that holy place and installed it in the present Bandar Bazar area apparently as a parallel to the Buddhist Lokenath already installed by the Buddhist merchants in the present Kazir Bazar area. This

Lingam was named Vateswar Siva. But the country was over-ridden by Buddhist Tantricism, so-much-so that the devotees of that cult edified Sylhet in their scriptures and religious observances as one of the most sacred spots.

The neighbouring country of Bengal was under the Pala Kings who were all Buddhists. Kesava Deva—the great—who was also known as Govinda-Rana Kesava Deva (1027) constructed a sky-scraping temple over the Kangsa-Nisudana image—on the hillock now occupied by the Civil Surgeon's Bungalow; and also brought 360 highly educated Brahmins proficient in Vedic observances from central India and performed a 'Yajna' lasting for 360 days before the image of Vateswar Siva. All these Brahmins were given sufficient land grants measuring 375 hals (1300 acres) and made to settle in 275 villages in different parts of the country.

Govinda Deva was succeeded by his second son Kangsa Narain, the first son Jadava Kesava being diseased; but Kangsa Narain was killed by a wild elephant while his young wife Kalavati—a princess of Behar was just in the family way for the first time.

Temples.

The Kingdom was managed by Ishan Deva—the younger brother of Kangsanarain—as a representative of Kalavati—the queen regent. Isan Deva constructed a temple over an image of Vishnu—*Madhu Kaitabhvri* on a hillock to the east of the minister's residence on the happy occasion of his sister-in-law giving birth to a male child, and made extensive land grants to the Brahmins who performed the installation ceremony. As Ishan Deva was not the lawful king, this land grant was endorsed by Jadava Kesava, Kalavati, her minor son Pravit, minister Vanamali Kar, and the Commander-in-Chief Viradatta. Pravit ascended the throne of his father when he attained majority.

All went on well for sometime, but after the death of Kshetra Pal (1110-1170), a court intrigue split up the kingdom into two. This king had two wives Ratnavati and Surama. The second wife was his special favourite—so much so that while a severe earthquake shock transformed the contour of his country raising up the level of many sea-like deep areas and forming a channel near the port town, the channel was named Surma river after the name of the queen. Ratnavati had no issue at the beginning, but Surama got a son—Brahmajit. But later on, at the old age of Kshetra Pal, a son was born also of Ratnavati, and he was named Dharmadhvaj. Many people harboured a suspicion about the legitimacy of this child.

When Kshetra Pal died, Brahmajit, being the eldest son ascended his father's throne but his life was made miserable by the clique of his North & South Sylhet step mother who claimed the throne for her son—she being the eldest queen. For fear of life Brahmajit tactfully shifted his headquarters to the high land area to the south of the Kuslata river and appointed his step brother Dharmadhvaj to administer the northern area as his deputy. Though outwardly there was good feeling between the two Dharmadhvaj thought himself to be the rightful king of the whole country and Brahmajit was his deputy, while Brahmajit and his associates thought the reverse.

Thus gradually the Sylhet Kingdom was split up into Northern and Southern Kingdoms—the names being still retained as North Sylhet and South Sylhet. The Southern Kingdom was called Brahmajit's area or Brahmanchal (anchal area), which name is now transformed into Baramchal, and the northern area was now known as Gauda—very likely as an imitation of the name of the powerful kingdom of Bengal.

Brahmajit brought a fresh batch of Brahmins from central India and performed a *Yajna* at Bhatara near his new capital, and installed duplicate images of Vateswar, Madhukantabharli, Kangsa Nisudhan, Hatta Kali and Griva Kali in his area. The competition for superiority spread from the king to the poorest subject and the southerners always claimed superiority over the northerners and vice versa.

The blood of the royal family had been thoroughly changed by very many admixtures through several generations, and the culture had also undergone a thorough change. Only the poorer section of original Pater clan somehow retained the memory of the blood of their origin. The kings were now under the full control of their subjects—who were of heterogeneous elements—hailing from different parts of India—coming first as traders job seekers servants cultivators or priests, and then gradually settling in the country as its permanent inhabitants. These people therefore, joined the two parties and made the gap wider.

Three generations somehow passed on, but at the time of Govardhan (1250-1260) of North Sylhet a very heinous clique put an end to this conflict between North and South. Joyananda of Brahmanchal died all on a sudden without nominating an heir to the throne. He had two sons. The elder Sreenanda had chronic rheumatism and the second son Upananda won over all the officials and on the plea of chronic disease deprived his elder brother of his

legitimate claim. Poor Srinanda protested in vain, and at last in disgust went away as a mendicant to Kamakhya in Kamrup, leaving behind his poor wife Anna Purna with a twelve-year old son Gobinda alias Fenchu.

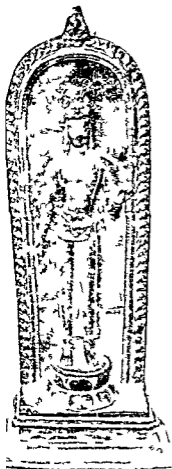
Upananda soon came into conflict with Govardhan the ruler of North Sylhet but his general Amar Singha was secretly and tactfully won over by Govardhan's shrewd minister Madan Rai: Chandra Kala—the daughter of Govardhan's General Virabhadra was given in marriage to Amar Singh with a camouflage of protests from other relatives of the girl. The ruse worked well; the ambitious Amar Singha contracted friendship with the Kuki Chiefs who were guarding the frontier of the Tipperah Kingdom to the western boundary of South Sylhet, and caused these ruffians to make a mean night attack on the royal residence of Upananda. The inmates of the palace were thoroughly massacred at dead of night—except a few young boys who were playing in a separate room in a corner, and the poor wife of Srinanda. These little boys ran out and took shelter in the jungle near by. Amongst them was—Govinda alias Fenchu, the son of Srinanda. These boys were guarded by a mendicant Giridhart—originally a man of Behar—and taken to Kamakhya in Kamarupa, where they were kept and trained in the Kulasia hermitage.

tribe Chiefs As a consequence Amar Singha was killed in the battle field his pregnant wife was placed under the care of Joydev Rai—the son of the minister of Upananda and Joydev Rai was put in charge of Brahmanchal as a feudatory Chief under the Tipperah King Shandul of Taraf fled to North Sylhet in fear, and the King of Tipperah placed the former minister Bhadra Janardhan as the ruler of Taraf Thus the whole of South Sylhet passed under the Emperor of Tipperah

While such a chaotic condition was prevailing in Sylhet, the Jaintia Kingdom had passed into the hands of the indigenous race, and the various Jaintia and the Khasi chiefs in collaboration with *Jaintia Invasion*, hired Naga, Kuki and Kachari soldiers were now trying to annex atleast North Sylhet to their Kingdom Laud—the kingdom in the Sunamganj area—was in no better condition The faithless queen Urmila of Pramardan having had an illicit intrigue with Arunacharyya, the throne had virtually passed on to this enterprising lover of the Brahmin caste The position of Kamarupa was no better and Bengal proper was suffering from the effects of Pathan vandalism

Kamarupa, however, yet retained the germ of pure Hindu culture round about the shrine of Kamakhya, and military training was imparted to the youths of the country in a religious institution—called *Khulsia asram*—on the north bank of the Brahmaputra river This place is not yet identified but very likely, it was situated somewhere in the present Kulsi reserve Forest or in present Sual Kuchi Govinda alias Fenchu, the son of Srinanda of South Sylhet was admitted with his associates by the mendicant Giridhari into this Kulsi hermitage and was given education and military training for twelve years Here, in this hermitage Govinda contracted friendship with Achaknarain—and Hiravati—the son and daughter of a chief of the Jalpaiguri area who had been killed as a result of the political turmoil in his kingdom, his wife being taken away as a captive by his adversary These two orphans were brought to the Kulsi hermitage by their faithful nurse Mandavi and her son Jhantu Govinda fell in love with Hiravati, and after completing his education he came back with his associates and his fiance and her brother to try his luck in his paternal kingdom When he reached Sylhet, he learnt to his great surprise that Govardhan had been killed in the battle field and the rebels were marching towards the capital

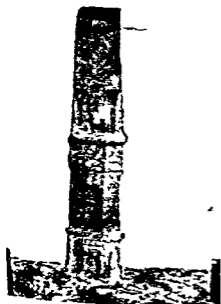
Govinda rushed on with his friends who were all yet in the dress of



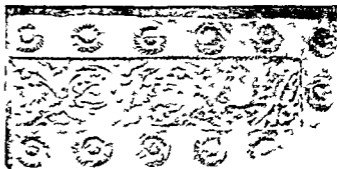
Metal Image of Lokenath Buddha  
Ker bazar Sylhet



Mahashmard n Durga (Form of Gau Govinda's Palace)  
Mazumdar Village Sylhet



Brick Pillar Laur Sylhet



Scroll work in Brickbuilt palace Laur

Sannyasins, and attacked the rebellious army from the back. This was quite unexpected, and the rumour that the lord Vateswar, the tutelary guardian deity, had sent his troops in the guise of Sannyasins to protect his country from the hill tribes—caused a sudden break-down in the morale of the invaders and they ran away pell-mell.

Aparna, the queen of Govardhan, fell prostrate with her baby son Garuda in her lap at the feet of the Sannyasin saviours and begged of them to take over charge of the kingdom so long as her baby son was a minor. But Govinda soon threw off his dress of a Sannyasin, and gave out his identity, when all the officials of the court hailed him as the rightful heir to the throne of Gauda. Thus he came to be known by the name of 'Gaud Govinda'.

Govinda was married to Hiravati with due éclat, Aparna and Garuda remained in the same family, all the former officials were kept in their own positions except that the twelve friends of Govinda were given high positions of trust and responsibility. An ambassador was sent to the King of Tipperah with presents and a message of cordial friendship, when the broad-minded Ratan-Manikya returned Brahmanchal to the rightful heir—accepting only the gift of an elephant in exchange. The eight-year-old daughter Lalosa of late Epavishnu was married to Achaknarain—the brother-in-law of Govinda and he was intalled as the feudatory ruler of the Taraf state.

Chatra Singha—a prince of Bhagalpur—having lost his paternal Kingdom got a small state as a gift from his friend Dharmadhar—the king of Tipperah in the hilly area in the south-west corner of the present Karimganj Subdivision. This was known as Magadhi Pahar the Magadhi Hill) and the kingdom was named Chattachura or Chatachura. Chatra Singha's son Konok Singha married the sister of the Tipperah King Ratan Maniky, and the capital town was named Konokpur after him. Konok Singha's son Protap Singha built a town called Protapparh. Santi-Priya—the sister of Protap Singha was married to Garuda—the cousin of Govinda—the son of late Govardhan; and as a marriage dowry, he got a portion of the kingdom of Pretap Singha in the eastern part of Karimganj. In this area, there was a big market-place where war-weapons were sold, and the place was known as Chap-hat or Chap-ghat.

Gauda Govinda reorganised the country thoroughly. The contour

of the country had been changed by frequent earthquakes and the big war boats were of no use except at the time of high flood. He therefore built up forts all over the country at different convenient places and started training camps for soldiers. Various weapons like small field guns were introduced and the dexterity in using bows and arrows with various deadly devices became a speciality of the Sylhetti infantry.

The palace of the minister was reconstructed to a seven storied tower in bricks. The ground floor was occupied by a section of the royal army, the first floor was given to the Commander in Chief, the second was occupied by the prime minister Mona Rai, the third was converted into the cabinet chamber, the fifth storey was reserved for royal camp while the topmost storey served only as a minaret to be illuminated on festive occasions.

But the king was fully under the guidance of the Brahmins and the Kayasthas whom he could not interfere with in matters social and religious. Hemmed in by Muhammedans in the west, large numbers of Brahmins, Kayasthas and Vaidyas migrated to Sylhet which was still a stronghold of Hinduism, and here they introduced their policy of retaining the sanctity of the religion by the process of elimination. The orthodox Brahmins who came with the Senas of Bengal from the Deccan started an embargo upon the followers of Buddhist Tantricism—the then prevalent religion of the country—as untouchables or depressed. The same policy was adopted in Sylhet and even the Brahmins who were brought from Central India by Govinda Rana Kesava Deva were looked upon as of low class, being derisively termed Govindi Brahmins while the Brahmins brought by Brahmajit of South Sylhet posed as pure vedic Brahmins. The soldier class—Dasas, the naval army class—Namasudras and Kaivartas—who as a class were influenced by Buddhism and Buddhist Tantricism were looked down upon as low class wine sellers and fish catchers by these foreign immigrants who by virtue of the royal favour—did a great disservice to their patron by putting one class of his loyal subjects against the other. Images of ten hundred Durga and Siva were installed in the palace.

A few poor Muhammedan families had settled as cultivators in Taraf and Sylhet. They had been left as helpless decrepits by the unsuccessful Muhammedan invader of Bengal during the rule of Govardhan Burhanuddin, a poor Muhammedan.



-mmedan of Tulitkar village near Sylhet town took it into his head to secure the longevity of his newly born baby by sacrificing the life of a poor calf in honour of his God; but unfortunately, a foolish hawk carried a hoof of the sacrificed calf to the house of a fanatic Brahmin, and this caused the chopping off of the right hand of Burhanuddin; and his beloved child was left adrift in the river on a helpless raft. About the same time, Nuruddin, a rich cultivator of Taraf, paid with his life the cost of celebrating the marriage ceremony of his son with the life of a cow.

Burhanuddin, and Nuruddin's brother Helimuddin went to Bengal and lodged a complaint to Samsuddin Feroz, the ruler of Sonargaon against the whims of the Kafir ruler of this God-forsaken country. Samsuddin sent his general Sikandar, but he was badly defeated, and Gauda Govinda's aunt celebrated the victory by digging a big tank in the present Ambarkhana area. The tank was known as Rajarmar Dighi (the tank of the queen mother).

The enterprising Burhanuddin then sent an appeal to the emperor of Delhi Ghasuddin Bulban sent his nephew Sikandar Ghazi with a strong army to establish the Kingdom of Allah in the eastern region of Kafirs. But the Ghazi's soldiers were staggered at the dexterity of the Kafir soldiers in using deadly arrows from far away places—causing havoc amongst them. This they attributed only to an inexplicable art of witchcraft, for they could not think of any war-fare except in face to face battle. The Ghazi had to run back to Bengal and send on appeal to the headquarters for more men.

Burhan and Helim were disappointed, and they set out on a pilgrimage to Mecca to lodge their last complaint to the Almighty whose headquarters were belived to be located in that holy place. But on their way, they came upon a holy man —Pir Shah Jelal—an inhabitant of the Kania village of the Yemen state of Arabia—travelling on a polemical mission with 360 followers of his faith. The aggrieved persons of Sylhet represented their grievances to this holy man of the west who was surprised to hear of such fanatic intolerance, and agreed to come over to and see the country that could entertain such people. The party was met by the reorganised cavalry of Sikandar Ghazi, and the sword of the general combined with the supernatural religious attainment of the holy man soon broke down the morale of the brave soldiers of Gauda Govinda who in despair issued cease shoot orders. This was in 1304 A. D.

Shahjehal entered the capital and established his camp on a small hillock to the north-west corner of the temple of Kangsa-Nisudhana; and Gauda-Govinda escaped with the members of his family to the shrine of Griva Kali. His aunt Aparna, cousin Garuda and Garuda's wife Shanti were left in that shrine in the care of the priest, and the king marched with his wife Hiravati and little son Nirvana towards Kamarupa. Aparna and the party started for Taraf in a boat but at the instigation of Subidnarain, a treacherous officer of the Forest Department of the old regime, they were followed by Muhammedan soldiers. Garuda jumped into Puni Beel to avoid disgrace, but the shrewd boatmen somehow managed to escort the two ladies safely to the harem of Achaknarain, where however, they immolated themselves in the shrine of Tunganath Siva having made a vow to fast for ninety days unto death.

After establishing themselves at Sylhet proper, the Muhammedans directed their attention to Taraf; Achaknarain sued for peace, but this was allowed only on the unconditional surrender of arms and the religious faith. Achaknarain fled with his family to Mathura.

Laud Kingdom was tackled next, and the King Durbar Singha was made to embrace the Faith of Islam. He was renamed Durbar Khan. Durbar Singh's son Govinda Singha tried his level best to regain the lost prestige of his family, but he was also caught and converted to Islamic faith under the name of Habib Khan. This was in 1566 A D.

The peculiar custom of the Hindus—of considering the divine human body and soul being vilified beyond rectification by the simple process of forcing any food forbidden or acceptable—into the mouth or by forced or occasional rape—by a man of a low caste or outcaste, was taken advantage of by the shrewd Muhammedan adventurers who found it very easy to Islamise many powerful Hindus who were of any account, without much war-fare or blood-shed. The process started in 1304, and within a very short time, due to the efforts of 360 followers of Shah Jelal they increased their number, being indirectly helped by the Hindus who preferred to be outnumbered, blindly sticking to the policy of weakening their race by the process of elimination. The soil of Sylhet was declared to have had the same chemical and physical properties as of Arabia. The so-called low castes formed the majority of the converts. *Maripathi*

or Sufism which is allied to Hindu Vedantism found more favour with these converts and Maripathi songs composed by village bards bearing on mysticism were sung with veneration in accompaniment with musical instruments. Graves of *Aulias* or preceptors were worshipped with a spirit of veneration that verged on idolatry.

Those who stuck to their faith were however, left undisturbed. Culture of Hindu religion and of Bengali literature went on side by side.

*Hindu culture.* Village bards composed lyrics on mythological plots or on local incidents; and lyrics on Monosa or the Snake Goddess composed by Sylhet bards became socio religious epics. Navadwipa, the university of Hindu culture in Bengal was resorted to freely by Brahmin youths of Sylhet. Sukreswar and Vareswar, two learned brothers of Dhakadakshin village were appointed as court poets by the king of Tipperah to compile the history of the Tipperah Royal family.

Pundarikaksha Sarmah alias Adwaita Acharyya (born 1465 A. D), the son of the courtier of Dvya Singha, the king of Laud went over to *Navadwipa* and started a movement for social and *Vaisnava Movement.* religious reorganisation for the Hindus. He was joined by Nimai Pandit alias Chaitanya Deva, the young son of Jagadish Misra, an inhabitant of Dakhadakshin of Sylhet; and a new movement of Vaisnavism based on emotional love for God brought the whole Hindu population to a common platform of universal brotherhood. Many scholars and enthusiasts of Sylhet joined the new movement and helped it in its success.

The Nawab of Murshidabad when he got the charge of the administration of Sylhet sent a lot of Hindu officials from Murshidabad and Dacca to Sylhet and their progeny now constitute the majority of the aristocracy of the district.



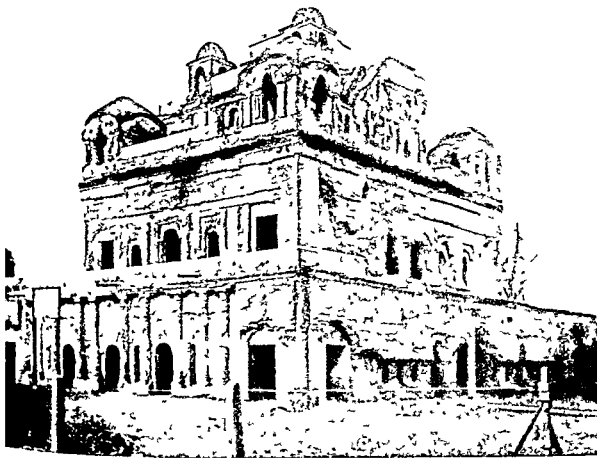
# Chapter XIX.

## THE AHOMS

Several Mongolian tribes living in the hills on the western border of China—headed by the Chao tribe invaded China in about 112 B C and ousted the powerful Tsang dynasty of that powerful empire. The Chao who had intercourse with Egypt and other countries in Central Asia in connection with trade imbibed a lot of the Egyptian culture and now mixing the Tsang culture with their own, they evolved a new culture known in history as the Chao-culture.



Royal Insignia and Seal of Ahom King



Chinese onslaughts, they constantly fought amongst themselves. A section of them went down to the south-east and in Shan states. defeating the Mon-Khmers and other ruling races of that area, established a powerful Kingdom which was known as the land of the Tais or according to the Burmese—the land of the Shans or the Shams. Here they came in contact with the Buddhist and the Hindu cultures that were propagated there by early Indian colonisers, and mixing freely with them politically, socially, and racially evolved a new culture of a high order. The Kingdom gradually came to be known as Siam or the Thai-land.

The conservative group remaining in the original hilly area, still persisted in the worship of Chumdeo (life and strength giving God) and Religion & Culture. At-phra-Loung (Mother-goddess-lustre). Chumdeo appears to have been an abbreviated form of *chao* (chuh) *ma-Deva* (Heaven great God). The influence of Lord Buddha reached them only in a distorted form—Fvat, Fia, till he became Fa or Pha and was honoured by the use of the term as an epithet after the King's name. The traditional connection with the Chaos was retained in the first epithet of the names of the Kings and the winged Lion Taotl of the Chinese Tsing culture was used as the royal insignia. The influence of the Chinese Chao culture—in writing family history and recounting the deeds of the forefathers of the family on every solemn occasion like marriage &c—became a custom with them. The influence of the Egyptian culture which influenced the Chaos as well—in burying the dead with a host of living attendants and various necessities of life in a house built with timber and then covering it up with earthen mound in the form of a pyramid, was retained scrupulously as a sign of glory and aristocracy. Dilly life was regulated by heavenly bodies counted upon according to Chinese astronomy;—sixty years making a century, and each century having a separate name.

Here, in one of the petty Kingdoms of the frequently quarrelling hierarchy Meung-Mit, a lucky prince of the family of Khunglung, had an unlucky quarrel with his step-brother about his share of the kingdom in the Hukong Valley, and in a state of despair and disgust left the paternal country to try his luck in fresh field and pastures new.

Accompanied by a band of seven brave friends and 9000 followers, he marched west-wards with the *hengdang* (divine sword) in one hand, and the symbol of Chumdeo—the spoil of a nightly theft from the palace of Meung Khong, in another; and after a desperate march over

many hills and dales—with atrocious and brutal encounters with many strange tribes that dwelt sparsely in these God forsaken and inaccessible areas—he emerged after 13 years into the plains of the Brahmaputra Valley in 1228 A D in a place near about present Namrup

Chao-Ka Pha—commonly known as Chukapha meaning Heaven-come-God (Hkuni Sam Long of the Burmese record) lived in this fertile land as an enterprising cultivator with his followers for about another 13 years migrating from place to place as an unsettled band of fortune seeking immigrants.

The powerful Kamarupa empire was no longer in existence along with the dissolution of the empire, her name had also been dissolved the western portion was now known as **Conflict with Morans** Kam pur and the eastern portion somehow preserved the old tradition only in name in Nam rup The Kings in the various mushroom kingdoms—each jealous of his immediate neighbour—took no notice of this insignificant band of strange immigrants But the Morans in the north eastern part of the country perhaps saw into the inner motive of this apparently harmless band of immigrants and soon came into conflict with them The result was disastrous for the Morans they were totally defeated their females were forced to the bed side of the sturdy conquerors and the males were made literally hewers of wood and drawers of water

This first victory—which was really very easy, made Chukapha quite confident of his strength and gave him an insight into the weakness of the rulers of the various kingdoms in this country **Saumar kingdom** The Varahis in the Simaluguri area to the north east of Sibsagar were first won over as friends by a show of implicit devotion to their tutelary deity—Garuda borne Vishnu—or the Bird God or the Charal Deo and then driven out to the west Kingdom after kingdom and tribe after tribe began to fall before these immigrants of the east—sometimes easily sometimes after a strenuous fight and sometimes after a teacherous retaliation and soon Chukapha declared himself a direct descendant of the King of Gods to have come down from heaven by a golden ladder with the key of heaven in one hand and a royal charter in another to rule over this country He was proclaimed as the Chao-Pha or heavenly God—Swarga Deo But the country was over ridden with Buddhist Tantric cults the north eastern part of ancient Kamarupa, where the kingdom was established

being known as Mastaka (Mahtaka or Mataka) by the Morans from the Austric conception of the head of the mother country, was named by the Sanskrit-knowing Buddhist-Tantrics as Sumeru (meaning head), and this being a big centre of their cult the area was commonly known as the Saumara-pitha.

The new conqueror considered it a glorious tribute to be known as the protector of the Buddhist Tantric religious centre and assumed the designation—Saumjareswara or the Lord of the Saumara country.

The Morans—as stated before, being a combination of the Austriacs and the Bodos, the phallic emblem of creation—U-Mei-Ludai-Pha now Buddhist-Tantric became Umpha and the Buddhist Tantric goddess Tara <sup>Gods</sup> Devi (of the Bodo Fria-Tara) assumed the form of Fria-Tara-Loung. The Buddhist Tantric goddess Hariti who had been admitted into the pantheon as Sitala-Mai (Goddess of small pox) became Ai to the Bodos and others in this part of the country and was readily accepted by the new immigrants as Ai-Fria-Loung (Goddess Mother-bright). The Varahi God Charai-Deo continued to receive their homage as he was the lucky God round whose seat the foundation of the Kingdom was first laid. It was also made a custom that after death, each king should be buried in the hillock where the temple of this God stood, apparently with an idea that he might help the departed king in his last journey.

The conquerors however, named the country as Meung-dun-Chun-Kham or the gold-abounding-Country; but as they were known generally by their Burmese name Sham (Shan), the <sup>Assam</sup> people of this country pronounced this word as Asham or Aham; and from this, the country appears to have assumed the present form of its name—Assam, and the people descending from the Shan invaders are called the Ahoms

In this newly established kingdom—a system of Government based more or less on the tribal chieftainship was adopted: the King was the chief and he had two personal counsellors with whose <sup>Administration</sup> consent the whole administrative machinery was run. The duties of these two ministers were not only academic; in times of war-fare they led the armies in the battle field. Their duties were not generally confined to particular portfolios, in every matter their advice was effective, but for the sake of discipline one was senior to the other in official capacity. They were really the two great noble,



pillars of the whole Ahom administrative system, their combined wish could make or unmake a king, and in the event of a throne falling vacant they held power to run the administration. The posts were hereditary—usually going down from father to son, but the selector had to be approved by the King. In case of inefficiency the king had the prerogative to nominate a suitable man from the members of any of the seven noble families that had accompanied the first King. But though the two ministers could rule the Kingdom ever when there was no King, none of them could ever aspire to sit on the throne—for the Ahom mentality would never tolerate any body except of the divine blood to occupy the royal seat.

The synonymous word of local origin for the position held by these two ministers was Goswami or Gassan—the divine preceptor, and they came to be known as Bura-Gohain and Bargohain.

Brutal murders treacherous atrocities mixed with display of heroism both by males and females, banishment of a faithless wife or jealous co wife, abduction of a beautiful virgin, brutal murder of a troublesome King, heinous assassination of an interfering or rebellious noble, and the shameless feud between the father and the son marked the first few generations of the Ahom administration—which was, perhaps of necessity, characterised by a rigour that often times took the form of violence and not infrequently verged on brutality. Every battle however, ending either in conquest or in treaty resulted in extension of the dominion, fresh accumulation in the treasury and invariably a fresh addition to the harem. And thus the Ahom Swargadeo shone forth brighter and brighter in glory,—the tutelary deity Chum-Deo supplied him with life giving energy while the adopted Buddhist-Tantric gods and goddesses helped him in his efforts. His departed forefathers continued sending forth to him their good wishes, being propitiated by the sacrifice of cows and white buffaloes from their progressive pilgrimage to heaven in accompaniment with living servants, maid servants, horses, elephants and other royal paraphernalia. For him the Ahom Deodhai held communion with God by means of divine incantations, the Ahom Bailung foretold the daily good or evil by studying the flesh of the leg of the hen, while the Chei-Rei goaded him indirectly to history-making activities by noting down on bark-sheets or *tula-pat* (coarse paper) the daily events of his life. The winged Lion was adopted as the Royal insignia after the Chinese Trott

of the T'sang dynasty.

In 1376, the Ahom King Tao-Khamti was strong enough to face successfully several bloody encounters with the valiant Soctias but was too weak to manage his termagant Chief queen who, barren *Hindu in laenco* herself, took the royal prerogative in her hands once, when the King was away, and by her inscrutable way of judgment found her co-wife, the rival to her conjugal rights—guilty of treason and peremptorily sentenced her to capital punishment. The unfortunate culprit was pregnant at the time, and the clever nobles of the court interpreting capital punishment for a pregnant woman as equivalent to helpless banishment, left her adrift on a raft in the Lohit river. The wind and the current tempered Royal justice with *divine mercy* and carried the raft to the Habung Kingdom where a kind hearted Brahmin perchance caught hold of the raft and gave the helpless royal consort shelter in his village home on the bank of the Dholi river. The queen was delivered of a male child in time, but she died soon afterwards leaving the helpless baby to the care of the kind hearted Brahmin god father. The henpecked husband fell a victim to the intrigues of the harem soon afterwards, and left the nobles faced with constitutional crisis for full eight years—when the state was ruled with a vacant throne—there being no legal heir. The helpless prince who was brought up carefully by the kind-hearted Brahmin of Habung was at last found out and brought to occupy his father's throne, but he would not come unless the whole family of his Brahmin God-father was allowed to accompany and stay by him.

The Brahmin found a place and a responsible position in the Ahom palace, his sons got offices in the court and his friends and relatives got extensive land grants *Salagram*—the symbol of the Hindu God—Vishnu, found a place by the side of Chumdeo, the king was installed according to Hindu rites and the incantations of the Deodhais were supplemented by the Vedic hymns of the Bramins.

A new cultural era started in the country. The Habung Kingdom had maintained true Hindu culture and civilisation—as the last remnant *Hinduised.* of the ancient glorious empire of Kamarupa under independent Hindu rulers, and the Brahmins of that Kingdom now started flocking to the Ahom Kingdom as job seekers and *winy* s of royal favour. They began to spread the pure Hindu ideas *amo,* est the Ahoms and also amongst other inhabitants who had been

reduced to a state of degradation so far as religion and culture were concerned. But behind this bright silver lining lurked a dark cloud which assumed a catastrophic appearance in 1520 A. D., while the diplomatic Ahom King Suhungmung assumed the Hindu name Swarga Narayan and using the progency of the Habungia immigrants in his country as fifth columnists easily defeated the ruler of the Kalita Kingdom and annexed Habung to his territory.

Annexation of Habung was a stepping stone to annexation of the neighbouring Sootia Kingdom in 1523, and many Brahmins and other high class people along with artisans of all classes of both Habung and Sootia were made to settle in different parts of the Ahom Kingdom. The Kachari Kingdom was next ransacked in 1536 A. D.

Friendship was contracted with the King of Manipur in 1535 A. D. by sending a princess of the royal family as a present to the Manipuri King Kobomba (1523-1540 A. D.) who in his turn reciprocated by sending a Manipuri princess to the Ahom harem. This was probably a diplomatic move against the future probable troubles in the Kachari Kingdom.

Thus in the Upper Valley, the Ahoms became very powerful and the whole area was comprised in one vast Kingdom. But severed long ago from the parent culture of China, the Ahoms had little to look back on and cut off totally from the parent group in the Shan States they had nothing to draw inspiration from. They therefore had to rely on their subjects who had a culture of high order for inspiration and support and being poor in number but strong in valour they started multiplication of their race by admixture of blood and Ahomisation of some of the nobles of other tribes by matrimonial allurements or pecuniary inducement. Thus the Ahoms assimilated all that was best amongst their conquered races, and their loyal subjects, retained all that was dignified in the Ahom customs. The result was a mixed culture with the ancient culture of Kamarupa preponderating. A mixed language with the Kamrupi words preponderating was evolved and was used in the court in foreign despatches and in Ahom chronicles.

In the matter of administration, a third office—Bar Prtrogohan was created for a step brother of the King, who had been brought up by a Naga along with the boy's banished mother. An office corresponding to the Sandhi-Vigrahaka of ancient

Kamrupa was created and the designation was Sandhikai or Handique (foreign ambassador); the Chief justice or Nyayadhikarana was similarly designated as Nyaya-sodha-Phukan. Nobles both Ahoms and non-Ahoms, were complimented with titles both of local and Ahom origins such as Barua and Phuken, both meaning noble men. The conservatism of the Ahom court was diluted by admitting nobles of other communities, and the hereditary claims to offices even of Buragohain and Bargohain being the chief pillars of administration was removed. To run the administration of the vast kingdom efficiently, a long list of officers beginning from the keeper of the royal poultry to the Viceroys in out lying stations filled up the Civil list of the Ahom court, and the posts were filled up by competent men selected from all the races and tribes.

The whole population of the kingdom was on the count:—Four adults or *paiks* as they were called, formed a '*got*' or a company. Over twenty men was an official called Bora, over hundred a Saikia, and over a thousand a Hazarika. Each and every village had such officials in charge of the people, and the administration was so well organised that scarcely was there any chance of a man escaping notice. At a later date, a *paik* of an ordinary Ahom family was missing from the fold of a Bora, and when the then Chief Minister became furious, the poor official after thorough enquiry, shiveringly explained "Your honour is searching for the shadow shutting the eyes to the substance"; and the exasperated Kiriti Chandra Barbarua had to take pains to prove his high pedigree by bringing credentials from the original Ahom home

the incarcerated Sootias, the insulted Bodos and the job seeking and flattering foreign immigrants. Though they favoured the local culture from a diplomatic view-point, they were not yet thoroughly initiated into its principles. They maintained an uncertain position as orthodox Ahoms before the conservative Deodhais, and as true Hindus before the Hindu priests. The result was that no religion could thrive properly, and the culture was in a state of stalemate.

The Koches rose in power in 1515 A. D. in the western border of Kamarupa; and as a resurrector of Hinduism and Hindu culture, the Koch king made frequent in-roads in to the Ahom kingdom. Sanker-Deva of Nowgong started a movement for preservation and development of Kamarupi culture through the medium of Vaisnava religion modelled to suit the prevailing conditions in the country. But while he went to the Habung country, the local people did not show much interest in him, and the Ahom king, far from listening to his nation-building precepts, engaged him in catching an elephant for him. When he failed to check the wild elephant in the catch, the king ordered him to be beheaded. Sankar Deva somehow escaped arrest, his disciple Madhava Deva was let off after incarceration, but his son-in-law Hari had to lose his head.

The Koch king Naranarain advanced up to Narainpur in 1546 expecting support from the people of the erst-while Hindu kingdom, but the Habunglas were more concerned with the loaves and fishes that they were receiving from their new master—the Ahom king, than with the theoretical hopes held out by the king of distant Koch Behar. Naranarain was first defeated, but in 1564 A. D. he inflicted a crushing defeat on the Ahom king and annexed the territory upto the Bhoirell river in the district of Darrang to his kingdom.

Vaisnavism Sankar Deva fled to Barpeta in the Koch territory, and in that congenial atmosphere gave his scheme a practical shape.

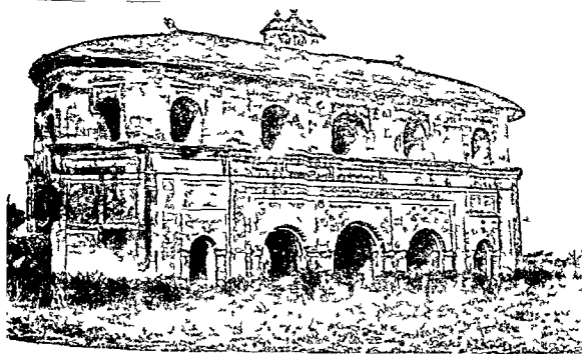
Sankar Deva died in 1569 A. D. in Koch Behar where he had been living as a learned noble of the royal court. He was survived by two sons and his wife who were living at Pathrauli near Barpeta.

Immediately before his death Sankardeva nominated Madhava Deva as his successor to his ethical throne in preference to his own son.

Damodar Deva, originally a poor Brahmin of Nowgong, who had first received the inspiration of the *Bhakti* cult at North Gauhati from



Palace with underground cellars (Tola tal gha) Rungpur Sbsagar



Pavilion (Rung ghar) Rungpur Sbsagar

Vasudeva, a travelling Brahmin mendicant of Orissa, got himself thoroughly initiated by Sankardeva at Patbausi, and after the death of his wife led the life of a saint living in the same village next-door to Sankardeva.

After the death of their revered master, the three disciples—Madhava Deva, his friend Narayan Thakur and Damodar Deva set themselves to thinking out a plan as to how to fulfil the unfinished mission of their great master, but within a year Madhava Deva owing to his extra puritanic ideas and over-strict disciplinarian notion fell out with Damodar Deva. Sankar Deva's eldest son Ramananda died at this juncture leaving a minor child—Purusottam, his widow old mother and widowed young wife to the care of his father's pet disciple, Madhava Dev who had planned the scheme with an institution at Sundaridiya, but had to now postpone the work and come back to Patbausi to look after the bereaved family.

Damodar Deva was lucky to have an able disciple in Bhatta Deva—a vastly learned Sanskrit scholar, and with the latter's extra ordinary organising skill and learned tactics started a regular institution—called the *Satra*—where he started preaching the ethics of Vaisnavism according to the codified formula. Disciples started to flock round Damodar Deva in great numbers. This opened the eyes of Madhava Deva, and in consultation with his friend Narayan Thakur he also started a similar but more attractive *Satra* at Farpeta.

But the education of Bhatta Deva was of a different nature, and all round education in higher *Shastras* enabled him to formulate a new scheme, incorporating the observances codified in Vaisnava-Tantras. This at once made a marked schism between the creeds followed by Madhava Deva and Damodar Deva.

The fundamental principle of Sankar Deva's cult was based on the Pantheistic formula that God and the creations are one as opposed to the Monistic principle that God or Brahman alone exists and the cosmos is only an illusory appearance. The Supreme Brahman is the Purshotama, the Supreme Lord—the Supreme Self who possesses both the immutable unity and the mobile multiplicity, "It is by a large mobility and action of His nature, His energy, His will and power, that He manifests Himself in the world and by a greater stillness, immobility of His being, that He is aloof from it, yet is He as Purushuttama or *Mahapurusha* both aloofness from Nature and attachment to Nature."

This in fact, "the foundation of the highest *Bhaktiyoga* which claims to exceed the right definitions of monastic Philosophy."

Bhatta-Deva also followed the same principle. But in practical observances, while Madhava Deva confined himself only to congregational or individual prayers by recitation of the *Mahapurushia* & *Damodarika*. Bhattadeva introduced ceremonial observances of Pujahs as codified by Vedic and Vaishnava-Tantric codes as compulsory methods. Though Sankar Deva, at the beginning installed an image of Krishna carved out of timber, he gave it up later on, Madhava Deva discouraged the installation of any images for the purpose of worship, though he retained the installation of a highly elevated pedestal decorated with lion and elephant motif of the Orissan style with a holy book placed on it as a sacred symbol before which the devotees bowed down and made offerings; the pedestal being preserved in a separate temple with reverential aloofness. Bhatta-Deva installed images of Vishnu or Krishna before which apart from congregational or individual prayers regular *Pujahs* according to Shastric codes were performed. The former was the symbol worshipper and the latter was the image worshipper. Though there was very little difference in theory, there developed a great schism in practice. The followers of the former were termed *Mahapurushias* and those of the latter the *Damodarias* or the *Bamunias*. The performance of ritualistic worship before the idol was scrupulously reserved for men of the Brahmin caste, whereas the function before the symbolic Book could be performed by any qualified man.



Bongshigopal Deva was a great devotee, he led a saintly life, and at the same time, he had a great organising power and a wonderful tenacity of purpose. He started his organisation in the North-Lakhimpur area, but met with a stern opposition from the Buddhists and the Tantrics and had to shift his headquarters from place to place. Kahikuchi, Kalabari, Deberapar and Saurani were his different centres, till at last on account of the incarceration of the misguided and misinformed Ahom King ProtapSingha, he shifted his headquarters to Kuruabanhi on the bank of the Dhansiri river in the Golaghat Subdivision. The Buddhists were gradually won over, and most of the Buddhist priests got themselves initiated enmasse with their followers by Bongshigopal Deva. Some of the Ahom nobles also accepted the religion.

In Barpeta side, Madhava Deva's own disciple Gopal Deva of Bhawanipur separated himself from his master and started his own independent organisation at Kaljar; Sankar Deva's grand-son Purushottam Thakur opened his own Satra and started initiating people independently. Konok Lata the wife of Purushottam's cousin Chaturbhaj Thakur (the son of Sankar Deva's third son Hari Charan) herself assumed the role of a preceptress and started initiating people and delegating the rights of preceptorship to others.

The field in Upper Assam had already been cleared by Bongshigopal Deva, and the Ahom Kingdom was now a fertile ground for propagation of the Vaisnava cult. Different preceptors of Barpeta side started sending up missionaries to the Ahom Kingdom, and within a short time, the whole of Upper Assam became interspersed with Vaisnavite Satras of different schools of thought.

As stated above, Bongshigopal Deva allowed the Buddhist priests to retain their own disciples but follow the new religious tenets; but this, though psychologically prudent at the time, proved harmful to the purity of the sectarian principle in the long run; Vaisnavism became adulterated with many Buddhistic ideas and rituals under a new garb. Buddha became re-incarnated as Hari and presided over the *Nihilistic* world. The fundamental principle of Kalachakraayan of defeating the effects of Time or *Kala* by ritualistic devices was incorporated into the neo-Vaisnava cult by certain missionaries; and the occult power or *Maya* became the alluring factor of another enterprising Vaisnava sect. The implicit obedience to the *Guru* or preceptor

who was no other than God Incarnate in imitation of the belief to words Buddha, dominated the observances of certain other sects of the Vaisnavas

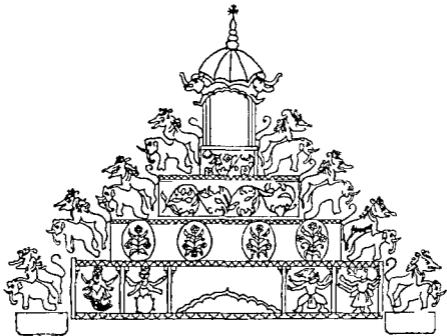
Bangshigopal Deva died in 165 A D, but before his death he nominated as his successor not his own nephew Joyhari, nor his devoted follower and servant Bonamali originally a Brahmin of Kalabari North Lakhimpur, but an outsider Hari Charan whom he had adopted as his son. This created disappointment, Bonamali left Upper Assam and joined the Damojaria Satra at Koch Behar, where he eventually became the chief of the institution. Hari Charan incurred the displeasure of the Ahom King Pratap Singha and was buried alive in 1631 A D.

Jadoman Deva and Aniruddha Deva, two scions of the Kayastha Bhuyan families of Upper Assam first got themselves initiated by Bangshigopal Deva and lived with him for several years as his staunch and favourite followers, but ultimately left their master and joined Gopal Deva of Kaljar Satra. With fresh ideas from their new master who, by the way, was a non Brahmin and Kayastha himself, and who separated himself from Madhava Deva, they came back to Upper Assam and started their independent organisations at Bansbari and Dinjan respectively. Aniruddha's elder brother Mohan Murari established the Bengnati Satra under the inspiration received from his brother. Aniruddha Deva modified the original theory and preached a new one.

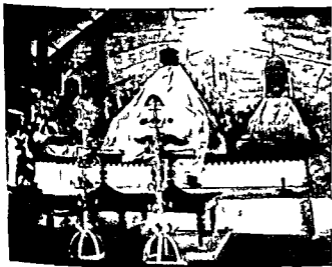
Aniruddha Deva claimed his lineage from a Nepalese noble family. One Dambara of Nepal having had migrated from that country to North Lakhimpur settled in Bali Kunchi village where he attained the position of a powerful land lord or Bhuyan, his progeny gradually became assimilated to the society and one Gondagiri was married to Sankar Deva's cousin. Aniruddha was the issue of this union.

A story is told of the reason of disruption between Madhava Deva and his disciple Gopal Deva of Kaljar and between Gopal Deva and his disciple Aniruddha Deva. There was a book on Occultism which is said to have belonged originally to Sankar Deva. This was inherited by Madhava Deva, Gopal Deva took the book away, it is said—without Madhava Deva's knowledge, and from him Aniruddha Deva took the book away in the same manner.

Thus gradually five sub-groups of the Mahapurushia Vaisnavism sprang up in Assam. The staunch followers of Sankar Deva are known



S nghanan  
 Wooden Pedestal of Vaishnava Satra



Holy Pedestal (Wooden) Mahapurushia  
 Satra Barpeta



Holy Pedestal (Silver) with Stone Image of  
 Govinda Aun ati Satra

*Vaisnava-School* as the *Purusha Sanghatists* (Sangha-society), those of the extra-puritanic principle of Madhava Deva are the *Nika-Sanghatists* (Nika-puritan), the followers of Gopal Deva of Kaljar are *Kala-Sanghatists*, those of Damodar Deva are the *Brahma Sanghatists* and the followers of Aniruddha Deva are known as the *Majamorias* or the *Meamorias*. Besides these, there are some other minor groups with certain modifications of principles in particular observances.

After Naranarain, the Koch Kingdom was split up between two families who were in constant quarrel and war-fare with each other resulting in the occupation of that country by the *Muhammedan invasion*. Muhammedan ruler of Bengal Muhammedan officials were stationed in different parts of the country and Muhammedan immigrants were encouraged to settle in Goalpara, Hajo, Gauhati &c. A Bengali Hindu—Satrajit, was created a Zemindar in a small estate near Sualkuchi. This area was used as an advance post by the Muhammedans for invading the Ahom Kingdom, and the Ahom King fully conscious of the devastating menace on the western border of his Kingdom made frequent endeavours to repel the Muhammedans. Frequent conflicts continued and the portion of the country between the Monas and the Bhoreli rivers frequently changed hands. At last in 1662 A. D. Mirjumla, the valiant Muhammedan general of Dacca, came to Assam with a very strong force. The invader found to his chagrin that the people of his faith who had previously settled in this land were more loyal to the cause of the country of adoption than sentimentally attached to the divine faith. All the same, he advanced up to the Ahom capital at Gargaon and captured it on the 17th March. But he found it difficult to retain permanent hold on the country and had to agree to a treaty with the Ahom King Jayadhwaj Sinha. According to the terms of the treaty, the country west of the Bhoreli river on the north bank of the Brahmaputra and of the Kullong on the South was ceded to the emperor of Delhi along with the presentation of a princess to the imperial harem; and the general returned back to Dacca to the intense joy of his army who were tired of this ghostly country and its beastly climate, with a rich booty of gold, silver, jewellery and forty elephants. But the exertion in the hazardous war and the effects of the sultry and damp climate shortened the longevity of the valiant general and he breathed his last before he could reach his home at Dacca.

The Muhammedans were now more or less permanently settled in Lower Assam and a cultural wave from the west began to sweep over the country. Architects, painters, musicians, dancers and artisans from Bengal began to influence the cultural background, and it was difficult to check the wave from proceeding up to Upper Assam. The Brahmin of Umananda temple at Gauhati got an extensive land grant from Aurangzib the emperor of Delhi

A severe epidemic of blood dysentery had broken out in the Muhammedan army while in Gargaon, and several members of the camp, some of high families were left behind either as disabled or to look after the diseased. They ultimately settled near about Sibsagar and were later on joined by others from the Gaunati side. Ajan Fakir began to keep alive the teachings of Islam amongst the Muhammedans in this area in the country, and by his method of *Zikir* was perhaps able to convert a small number of the indigenous people to his faith.

The catastrophe of the Muhammedan invasion and the threat to the civilisation of the country opened the eyes of Joyadhvaj Vaisnavism Royal Sinha and he made up his mind to rouse the people to the sense of self preservation and development of their culture. After a careful study of the psychology of his subjects, Joyadhvaj Singha sought to be initiated into Vaisnavism by the successor of the preceptor of the Kuruabahi Satra, whom Protap Singha had buried alive. The son did not turn up either for fear of royal oppression or for natural hatred against the family of the murderer of his father, but instead sent Niranjan Bapu, the pandit of the Satra—to the royal court. The King got himself initiated by this learned man in 1648 A. D. and all high officials followed suit. The King's zeal for the new religion grew more and more, and he brought Vanamali Deva, a learned Vaisnava scholar from the court of the Koch King Prana Narain for teaching the tenets of the religion to his subjects in 1663 A. D.

Niranjan Bapu was given an extensive landgrant of 12,000 acres in Majuli where the image of Vasudeva which Bangshi Gopal Deva had Vaisnava Sattras brought from Puri was installed at Auniati, Vanamali Deva was similarly placed at Dakshinpat where he installed the image of Jadav Rai Kuruabahi—the original Satra also got royal favour, where the son of Misra Deva stayed but his cousin shifted to Majuli and established a separate Satra at Garmur, which also received royal patronage.

With royal patronage and popular support, the Goswamis of these Satras became very rich, and finding themselves masters of the two worlds—the sacerdotal by divine charter, and the **Satra Administration** secular by royal and popular sanction, they started a kind of papal Government in each of their zones, in much the same way as the court administration, with a long list of officers. For collection of revenue of the Goswami's land grants and for the facility of collecting the annual ecclesiastical tax—which consisted of paddy, mustard, silk-thread, betel-nut, &c— and also money from the disciples living in different parts of the country, areas were divided into *Sahars* or districts according to the location of the disciples and an officer whose headquarters were invariably in the Satra—was placed in charge of the collection of each district on a commission basis.

Except Kuruabahi, the other three Satras encouraged a strictly celibate life, and each Satra maintained a population of about one thousand disciples all males vowed to the principle of **Celibate life in Satras** celibacy. Though this system was apparently physically unsound, yet, it was helpful in propagating the faith of the Lord and administering the papal Government of the Master at a very cheap overhead charge. The whole administration was in a way co operative as well as democratic. To keep the number of celibate disciples or *Udasin Bhakats* unabated, recruitment to this spiritual corps was made from ordinary villagers who were induced by a divine urge to dedicate their little boys to the God of the Satra as *Bhakats*. These youngsters were trained up from their child-hood by elder *Bhakats* each of whom maintained three to four of them and trained them in all the systems and customs of the religion including philosophy, dance, song and music.

How the celibate life came to be the custom in the Satras is not clear. Sankar Deva, the originator of the Satra system in Assam led a married life; he married even for the second time when his first wife died and begot three sons and two daughters, leading at the same time, the pure life of a high priest. His first disciple Madhava Deva, a Kayastha, remained unmarried by choice, but the Satras started by him at Barpeta and Sundaridia are now manned by married preceptors, only a few celibate *Bhakats* are now found in the Satras. Damodar Deva's disciple Bangshi Gopal Deva, the preacher in Upper Assam led the life of a recluse and was unmarried, before his death in 1625 A.D, he nominated as his successor for his Kuruabahi Satra, not his own nephew

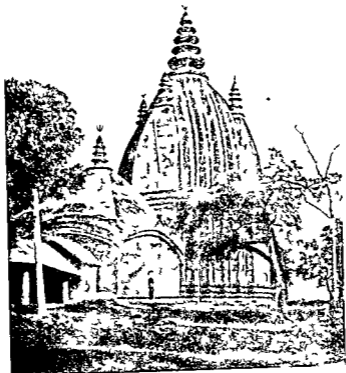
who led an unmarried life, but a married man only in consideration of the latter's merits.

But later on, Bangshigopal Deva's disciple Niranjan Bapu while he got the royal favour, introduced the strict system of celibacy in his Auniatisatra, and Gopal Deva's grand nephew (through his cousin) Lakshminarain followed the same principle in his Garamur satra. Vanamali Deva who had been originally the disciple of Bangshigopal at Kuruabahi left the Assam organisations after the latter's death and went to Koch Behar where he was reinitiated by Bala-Deva of the Damodarjan Satra there, and while he came back to Assam under the patronage of the Ahom king, he also introduced the same strict system in his Satra at Dakshinpat. Of the Kayastha Satras, Madhava Deva's disciple Badula Ata established a Satra at Kamalabari through the patronage of a high official of the Ahom king, and he also followed the same system.

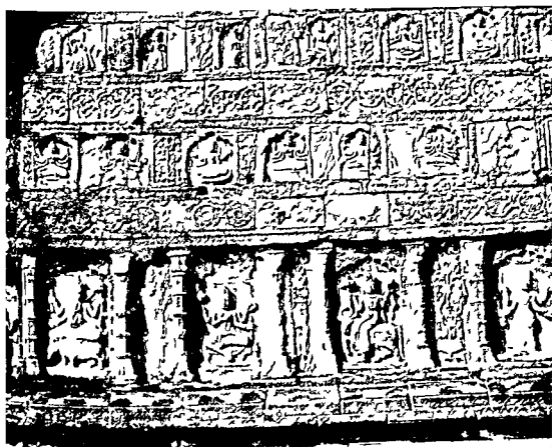
All the other Satras Brahmin or Kayastha did not bother about this system and they followed their original preacher Sankar Deva in social, religious and private life. The system of succession in these Satras is guided by one of the three principles of legal heirship, seniority of age in the family, and fitness for the job amongst the members of the family. The celibate Satras now follow quite a different method; the successor is selected not from among the Udasin Bhakats who had been living in the Satra for years together, but from outside. A young man is selected from any desirable family and is trained in the Satra and he is declared as the Adhikar-elect or the Deka by the Satradhikar with a formal approval of the Bhakats. The Adhikar thus elected is only the guardian and the custodian of the property.

Owing perhaps to the natural aversion of the four powerful celibate Satras to the fair-sex, the women in Assam who are otherwise useful helpers of their male partners in all spheres of life, are not granted any religious facilities. The nun system is totally discarded; and though Konok Lata, a lady of Sankar Deva's family, once became the head of a Satra, nobody else of her sex emulated her example, and the women in Assam are not allowed entrance into any important Satra now-a-days.

Sankar Deva, the founder of the Vaisnava movement in Assam, was himself a Bhuyan by birth, but he thankfully refused the gift of the secular



Sibdole Temple Sagar Town



Sculptured Panels Devi Temple Gaurisagar Sagar



**Cultural Influence of Satras** state of Tantikuchi offered him by the Koch king. But the followers of his faith fell away from his ideal when they accepted favour of the Ahom kings. Auntati and other Satras got estates which were much bigger than many of the old Bhuyan states. While Sankar Deva never accepted any gifts from his disciples, his followers imposed regular annual ecclesiastical taxes on their disciples. Secular interests were bound to conflict with divine aspirations; but all the same, the new Satra organisation became a stronghold of pure Assamese culture for whatever it was worth. Whatever might happen in the political atmosphere of the country, the common people looked to the Satras for solace both mundane and spiritual and the seed of the Assamese culture, so far as it centred in the Vaisnava religion of the country by its various expressions of mass prayer, songs, dance and music, could never be wiped out.

Sankar Deva, as has been stated before, made no distinction between caste and creed in the matter of preaching his religion. To him, all creatures of God were equal, and he accepted the so-called **Proselytisation** depressed, the tribals and even a Muhammedan in his fold. The followers of his religion, however, fallen away from the broad ideas of the original preacher, continued the system of proselytisation, if not for the sake of the religion, at least for the interest of annual gifts. But in this move owing to their changed out-look, they encouraged the so-called low class and the tribal people to aspire for promotion to higher castes. While initiated, these people were called 'Saraniks' and by stages of promotion, they were given the social status of Keot, Saru Koch, Koch, Saru-Kalita and Kalita. Thus, these people were considered as salvaged (*uddhar*), and when promoted, they invariably learnt to hate their own kith and kin who could not either take advantage of or advance quickly with this socio-religious concession. The Koches, the Kacharis, the Lalungs and the Ahoms who were once patrons of Hinduism were thus re-initiated and salvaged into the Hindu fold by this diplomatic move.

What with this defectively planned policy and what with the psychological vanity for easy wealth and power, the Vaisnava Goswamis of Assam did not or could not earn the credit of doing any sympathetic service to any of their neighbouring hill-tribes as a whole, while their less favoured and more energetic brother of the similar faith of Bengal, Santadas Vaisnava a chattanyal'e of the Narsingh Akhra (satra) of

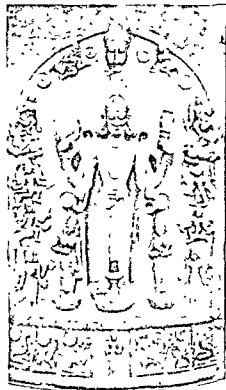
Sylhet scaled over the high hills of Jirighat and initiated Garibnewaz the king of Manipur, with all his subjects into the cult of his Master. Santadas settled in Manipur and during his life-time he could see all the Manipuris turned into pure Vaisnavas of the Chaitanya school singing the devotional songs in praise of Radha and Krishna.

The country was thoroughly reorganised; and shortly afterwards in 1661, Chakradhwaj Sinha drove away the Muhammedans from *Kenloropum*, Gauhati; and though in 1671 Aurangzeb sent Raja Ram Singha to conquer Assam with a camouflage of establishing a pure Hindu Kingdom in that locality, the Rajput general met with a sad reversal in the hands of the Ahom General Lachit Phukan in spite of his clever propaganda amongst the Hindu subjects of Gauhati and had to run away with his life to the safer zone at Goalpara.

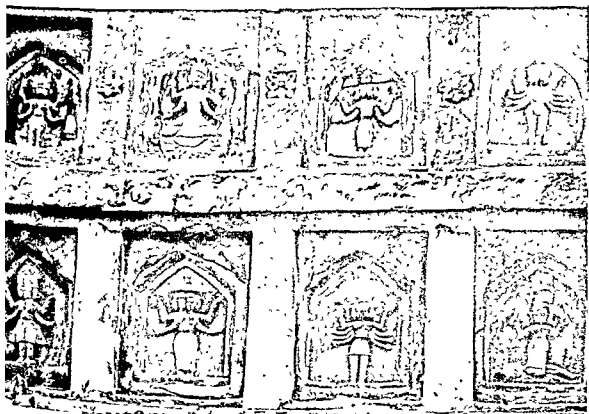
Though the Muhammedans had shifted to the extreme west, they however retained political relationship with the Ahom court, and the usual exchange of gifts continued from time to time. Along with various valuable gifts, the Ahom King and nobles got a black ointment plastered on a piece of cloth which latterly came to be known as *Kani*. This insidious gift caused a terrible rift in the Ahom court: claimants to the throne vied with one another for preference, the two ministers Sangurai and Debera vied with each other in the role of King-maker and King breaker; and Laluk Sala Barphukan, the Viceroy at Gauhati, made a fortune by quietly ceding Gauhati to Prince Muhammad Azim in 1679. This terrible aphrodisiac was handed down to the progeny of the Ahom King and nobles as a hereditary gift which totally sapped their vitality and manliness making them exclaim now, in a plaintive tone, against the enterprising temerity of the progeny of the donor of the gift.



Metal Image Mahismardini Durga, Negheriting Temple, Golaghat



Vasudeva Stone Image Kuaritol, Silghat, Nowgong.



Sculptured Panels, Sibdole Temple Negheriting, Golaghat.

last regained the throne, he assumed the name of Gadadhar Singha—literally a lion with mace in hand,—and at once chopped off the nose and plucked out the eyes of the Goswami who dabbled so much in worldly politics. The other Goswamis were also not very kindly treated, and *Udasin Bhakats* who by their idle vocation were preparing themselves for pilgrimage to heaven were made to take hoes and baskets and raise a road in the Sibsagar district for the use of the wordly pedestrians. This still goes by the name of Dhodar Ali or the Road of the Sloths. Godadhar Singha was devoutly attracted to a Tantric Brahmin Dasarath of North Lakhimpur. After crushing the Moghul army under Massum Khan in 1683 finally in the battle of Itakhuli at Gauhati, he erected the temple of *Umananla* on the peacock hill near Gauhati in 1694 A. D., and dedicated for god Siva extensive land grants to the Brahmans. A stone temple with materials collected from the ruins of ancient temples was similarly constructed at Bishnath and the Barthakur Brahmans were appointed the worshippers with land grants. The Brahmin priests at Dergaon, the descendants of Budhar Agambagis who had come from Bengal during the reign of Protap Singha continued to enjoy undisturbed the privileges already granted to them by the previous kings in worshipping their deity in the ancient temple at Aurvasram on the bank of the Gelabil river.

Brahmins of the Tantric cult were once again in receipt of royal patronage, and Godadhar's son Rudra Singha the Great, would not appoint any body except a Brahmin as an ambassador or a messenger to a foreign court.

Rudra Singha was a clever and a powerful king and he maintained political relations with Bengal, Koeh Behar, Tipperah, Manipur, Jainta and Cachar. A cultural wave from the west swept Tantric influence over Assam, and architects, painters, musicians, dancers and other job seekers from Bengal and other parts of India flocked to the Ahom capital. Temples were constructed on old octagonal plinths with ancient *skkhara* hybridised with semitic domes, the *Gopurams* usually assuming the form of an arched vestibule or a Bengal pattern double roof. Royal palaces were constructed with bricks by Ghansauddin, a Muhammedan architect from Bengal, according to his own design. Dancing girls from Bengal once more made the Siva temples resound with their dance and music. Mughal-Rajput painting adorned the pages of *palms* of palm leaves depicting the life story of

Sree Krishna Village bards composed in the spoken dialect ballads of love stories of Phulkuanr, Mani Kuanr and Jana Gabhru and sang them before the congregation of villagers. Learned pandits in the royal court composed in the refined old Kamarupi language epics based on the stories of Puranas and Mahabharata, and the court scribes wrote their Buranjis and official despatches in Assamese, the standard language of the court. Acrobatic gymnastics of up country women and the exciting demonstrations of foreign jugglers amused the minds of the masses.

Vaisnavism had received a set back and though the Satras maintained their own existence and learned pandits continued composing various theological books, a kind of moral degradation cropped up amongst the followers of the great preacher. While Sankar Deva made no distinction between caste and creed in the matter of initiation or mass prayer, the idea of the supremacy of the Brahmins now crept in amongst his followers, and a strong movement was set on foot against a Brahmin being initiated by a non Brahmin totally forgetting the fact that Sankar Deva himself was a non Brahmin and that Sree Krishna, the central idol of the cult was also a milk man by origin. The movement was nurtured by the Tantric Brahmins who were now recipients of royal favour, and was patronised by the four big Satra dhikars who were by chance all Brahmins, and the situation reached such a stage that Rudra Singha had to call both the parties to a conference, which ended in no honourable solution. Thus the rancour of caste distinction amongst the Vaisnavas of Assam began to undermine their solidarity. Rudra Singha first favoured Vaisnavism, being initiated into that faith by Harideva Bapu of Auniati but later on became specially devoted to Padmonabha Sarmah, the grandson of Dasarath, a Tantric Brahmin of super human attainments and granted him a seat in the court amongst other nobles. He allowed this orthodox Brahmin, against the court etiquette, to attend the assembly in simple dress without a turban on his head. This Brahmin who was better known as Mukali Muria Goswami on account of his custom of keeping the head unturbaned even in the royal court refused to accept any royal favour from the King, nor would he initiate him formally lest that should deflect him from his divine meditations to the pursuit of worldly gain. But instead, he brought for the King, a school friend of his from Navadwip Santipur of Bengal to get him initiated into the tenets of pure Tantricism.



वनमानिन्दव

वाजाठरुधर



शर

वृद्ध

प्रजा

वज्रकल

Manusc pt Pa nt ngs (Daksh npat Sat a)



Manusc pt Pa nt ngs (Scenes Bhaqavata Pu ana)

The pandit, Krishnarām Bhattacharyya Agam Vagish was first given a habitat on the Kamakhya hillock and was there fore known as **Parbatya Goswami** Parbatya Goswami. The princes and all the nobles were initiated by him, and after winning royal favour, he started importing to Assam his kith and kin nearly or distantly related and within a short time, the major portion of the present Kamrupa district became his estate by royal charter.

Since the time of the Sena kings Bengal had been a hot bed of caste distinction, and this was further aggravated by the Muhammedan occupation of the country immediately after the Senas. The social reformers of Bengal, far from taking any steps to strengthen the Hindu society and save it from the ruin, further helped its destruction by the process of elimination, in accordance with the newly formulated social canons of Raghunandan, till at a very late time the more practical reformer Debicharan Ghatak stopped the suicidal drive to a certain extent by his 'mel landha' system. Krishna Ram came from this country, and without considering for a moment the past history and the social frame work of Assam, started to introduce into the land of his adoption the suicidal customs of the country of his origin, by virtue of the power and the position he had luckily gained in this country. This was a kind of pleasant experiment with him, for though he attained both secular and sacerdotal power to a very high degree in this country, he and his progeny always retained an unbroken social connection with Bengal.

Chapter and verse are often quoted copiously from old scriptures and thousand and one instances are cited from ancient records against the prevalence of caste system in ancient India, but for certain reasons, the canker has become so deep rooted in the society that notwithstanding all the liberal washes that a so-called high caste man may put on in a political meeting or a diplomatic dinner the filth of the gangrene oozes out and that some times in a monstrously stupid way, as soon as he goes near his hearth. This weak point of the Hindu society was utilised by this shrewd Bengali Brahmin who found his ground already cleared by the Brahmin movement amongst the Vaisnavas, and he at once denounced the hereditary private and confidential Secretary of the king Siva Singha as a man of a very low caste and unworthy of such high trust, for, the Dalvajna or the astrologer caste was considered to be of not a very high

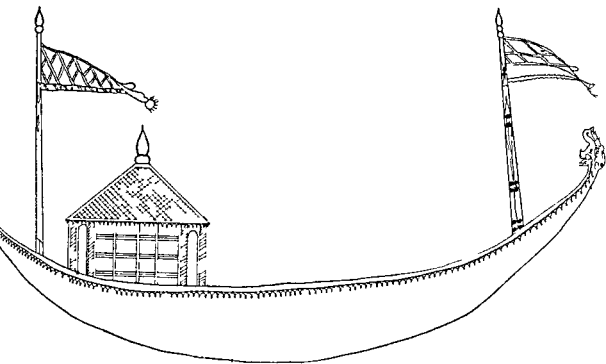
social status in Bengal. The move was furthered by other Ahom officials who had been jealous of the special favour shown to the astrologer class by the Ahom Kings. The idea of a non Brahmin being a religious preceptor even as a Vaisnava, was declared definitely repugnant, and the Brahmin Goswamis became so encouraged by the idea that they cut off all connections with the non Brahmin Goswamis and began to disown even Sankar Deva. A move was made to trace the initiation of Damodar Deva to Sri Chaitanya of Bengal, for Chaitanya Deva was a Brahmin. Even in the matter of daily socio-religious observances Krishnaram wanted to introduce the Raghunandanian code prevalent in Bengal without taking into consideration that Assam had for centuries been ruled by Hindu Kings who had their subjects ruled by certain codes suited to the country. This resulted in a tussle and at last the king had to decide the issue in a conference of both the parties in which it was agreed that the disciples of Krishnaram would follow the Bengal code while others were free to stick to the old code prevalent in the country.

After creating the dissensions amongst the Vaisnavas and totally undermining their solidarity Tantricism was proclaimed to be the religion of the king and of course, of the subjects.

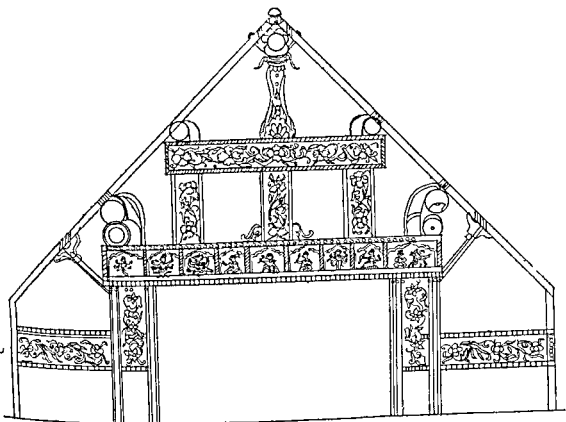
This was not a very wise move. Vaisnavism had thriven in the country for several generations under popular support and royal favour and it had passed the stage of being nipped in the bud. Moreover, the king, whatever might be his personal faith should have been an unprejudiced patron for all the faiths of all his subjects. Siva Singha (1714-1744) could not accommodate himself to the new move. But Siva Singha was a new convert to Saktism and Krishnaram was his preceptor and Divine Father. Along with the faith he also imbibed the superstitions inherent in it. Stars suddenly appeared on the horizon with a frowning attitude threatening the very foundation of the Ahom throne, and to avert the calamity, Siva Singha was advised by astrologers and pandits to abdicate in favour of his wife who had been a professional dancer and whom he had recruited from a temple near Sibsagar, not questioning for a moment as to what particular relationship an adept in that fine art had with the astronomical bodies in the sky.

Queen Phuleswari invited the Vaisnava Goswamis mostly of the non Brahmin origin to the palace and on their refusal to bow down





Pleasure Boat Kamalabar Satra



Timber Roof Frame of Kirtan Ghar Kamalabar Satra

**Vaisnavas** before the Sakta Goddess Durga, anointed their proud  
**Disgraced** foreheads with the blood of the goat sacrificed to the  
 deity, and thus sowed the very seed of the calamity which her accession  
 to the throne was expected to avert

A disgust against the royalty sprang up in the mass mind for this  
 imprudent act on the part of the over zealous and tactless monarch.  
 Certain Vaisnava preceptors, specially of the Gopal Deva and Anir-  
 ruddha Deva schools, started secret night clubs where people of all  
 tribes and castes joined together, and after the observance of religious  
 rites of Vaisnavism as preached by Sankar Deva and Madhava Deva,  
 took a vow of brotherly unity demonstrating the sincerity of their  
 purpose by eating and drinking together. Sometimes the food and  
 drink were of the same type as were taken by soldiers in the battlefield.  
 Originally political in motive, the system survives to this day  
 as a religious observance though performed very confidentially at night.  
 The custom is known as Rati Khowa or eating and drinking at night;  
 and the members are technically known as the 'Saugis' or the comrades,  
 the head of the gathering being known as 'Bura Bhakat'

Siva Singha was succeeded by his brother Promotta Singha (1744-  
 1751) who again was succeeded by his fourth brother Rajeswar Singha  
 the third brother, Borjana Gohain, or the sons of Siva Singha and  
 Promatta Singha were passed over due to court intrigues. During  
 these reigns many temples were constructed to Sakta gods and many  
 Brahmans became rich with land grants. The Kings became pure  
 Hindus and the Ahom Bailungs and Deodhais were cast into the back-  
 ground. The Ahom customs and observances were gradually forgotten.  
 Rajeswar Singha (1751-1769) would not take his food unless the  
 offerings to the Siva Lingam in the Negheriting temple were carried  
 daily by a special horse runner to his palace at Sibsagar at a distance of  
 fifty miles.

From the most ancient times, the Ahom Kings and Nobles  
 enjoyed the privilege of undisturbed repose after their death in their  
 palatial graves covered over with earthen mounds, accompanied by living  
 servants and various necessities of life, but when Rajeswar Singha died,  
 his dead body was burnt to ashes according to the Hindu rites, and since  
 then this custom came into vogue.

Tantricism however, introduced a new era of improvement in the  
 country. A lot is often said against idolatry, but the whole history of

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 The custom is known as Rati-Khowa or eating and drinking at night;  
 and the members are technically known as the 'Saugis' or the comrades,  
 the head of the gathering being known as 'Bura Bhakat'.

Siva Singha was succeeded by his brother Promotta Singha (1744-  
 1751) who again was succeeded by his fourth brother Rajeswar Singha  
 the third brother, Borjana Gohain, or the sons of Siva Singha and  
 Promatta Singha were passed over due to court intrigues. During  
 these reigns many temples were constructed to Sakta gods and many  
 Brahmans became rich with land grants. The Kings became pure  
 Hindus and the Ahom Bailungs and Deodhats were cast into the back-  
 ground. The Ahom customs and observances were gradually forgotten.  
 Rajeswar Singha (1751-1769) would not take his food unless the  
 offerings to the Siva Lingam in the Negheriting temple were carried  
 daily by a special horse runner to his palace at Sibsagar at a distance of  
 fifty miles.

From the most ancient times, the Ahom Kings and Nobles  
 enjoyed the privilege of undisturbed repose after their death in their  
 palatial graves covered over with earthen mounds, accompanied by living  
 servants and various necessities of life; but when Rajeswar Singha died,  
 his dead body was burnt to ashes according to the Hindu rites, and since  
 then this custom came into vogue.

Tantricism however, introduced a new era of improvement in the  
 country. A lot is often said against idolatry, but the whole history of

**Architecture.** the development of architecture and iconography all  
**Sculpture.** over the world, and specially in India centres round  
 idolatry in some form or other. The idea that the deity was the real  
 monarch and the king was his servant, led to the housing of the deity  
 in the conceivable best and permanent structure; and the whole  
 family of Singha brothers took to the construction of many temples and  
 excavation of many tanks all over the country

In the matter of architecture the newly developed custom was  
 followed. In many cases ancient sites and octagonal plinths were  
 selected for construction of new temples according to the new design.  
 Flat thin tiles manufactured with a lot of ingredients mixed with earth  
 to guard against efflorescence and brittleness were used as the chief  
 building material. Stone slabs with sculptures collected either from  
 old ruins or carved anew with rude workmanship—and terracotta  
 plaques designed according to the Muhammedan style were embossed in  
 panels of walls as decorations

Rudra Singha shifted the capital from Garhgion near Nazira to a  
 place called Meteka near present Sibsagar town and built a fine  
 city called Rungpur or the city of palaces. The new city was decorated  
 with tanks and temples. The Joysagar tank was excavated in 45 days  
 in 1697 A. D., and three huge temples on its bank were started in 1698  
 A. D. and completed in two years' time. The stone bridge at Namdang  
 on the main trunk road near the capital was built at this time.

Siva Singha's dancing-girl queen Phuleswari, in spite of her religious  
 idiosyncrasies excavated the big Gaurisagar tank and constructed  
 several temples of huge dimensions on its bank during the short period  
 she was on the throne

After the untimely death of Phuleswari her younger sister Dragupadi  
 succeeded her as the chief queen of Siva Singha, and through her  
 influence the big Siva-sagar tank with crystalline water was excavated  
 near the residence of high officials and two big temples were constructed  
 on its bank. The present town of Sibsagar owes its name  
 to this big tank. The queen mother also built a temple known as  
 'Kerl-Rajmao-dol'

Promotta Singha paid more attention to the improvement of royal  
 buildings. The Rang ghar or the pavilion—a two storied brick built  
 structure with its roof designed after the fashion of a thatched house,  
 was constructed to the south end of the capital to witness games and  
 parades. Two pucca buildings were constructed at the gate of the old



Fig. 1. Karnakya Temple Gauhat



Wooden Sculpture on the Wall panel  
Barpeta Namghar



Fig. 2. Wooden image of Krishna  
(Barpeta Namghar)



Wooden Image of Vishnu on Garuda  
(Barpeta Namghar)

capital at Garhgaon. The Sukreswar temple at Gauhati and the Rudreswar temple (in memory of his father Rudra Singha) in North Gauhati were constructed in 1752 A. D.

Rajesvar Singha too paid more attention to the improvement of palaces. He constructed a three storied chariot-like beautiful palace at the old capital at Garhgaon and brick built residential building for the members of the royal family with under-ground cellars at Rungpur. The architect was Ghansauddin, a Muhammedan from Bengal. The ancient Siva temple at Dergaon being threatened by erosion of the river, he built a new one on the Neghreting hillock and made an extensive land grant to his friend Baneswar Barua—the priest, for its maintenance.

Lakshmi Singha too constructed the Gauriballava temple near the town. The next king Gaurinath Singha, though a miserable administrator, did not neglect the improvement of the country otherwise. The Rudra-sagar tank and the Rudreswar temple at Naphuk were the works of this king.

The Ahoms were expert wood-workers, owing probably to their ancient connection with China, and stone-sculpture in Assam was gradually replaced by solid wood carvings. The Ahoms knew the use of gun-powder in fire arms, and as a matter of fact, they are credited with their first use in India. Probably, they learnt the art from the Chinese.

Iron had been in use in Assam from a very ancient time and the iron ores in the Khasi and Jaintia hills had been smelted for various purposes from time immemorial. The Ahoms collected iron ores from the Mikir Hills and smelted them in cupolas made with earth. The pig iron was run over stiff clay and sand and turned into oval shaped balls which were called 'Messa', Messamara near Dergaon in the Sibsagar District, and Messa near Silghat in the Nowgong district were two big centres for smelting iron ores. Kamar-gaon, and Kamarbandha near Golaghat had also similar factories. The whole of the Golaghat Subdivision contains even to this day, large mounds of the iron slags that were thrown out from the cupolas. Dhenkial near Golaghat was the centre for manufacturing fire arms, while Da-dhara was the centre for manufacturing swords and sharp weapons. Gold continued to be extracted in abundance from the sands of the Subansiri and the Burai rivers.

Samples of bronze and bell metal work by the Ahoms are also not insignificant in Assam, but it is a wonder why the people connected with ancient China totally neglected the art of manufacturing porcelain wares while the kaolin mines in Assam were not rare.

Lakshmi Singha was suspected to be an illegitimate child of Rudra Singha's, and he was merely a puppet in the hands of his prime minister Kiriti Chandra Barbarua—who again,—having risen to this high office from the position of an ordinary cultivator was very touchy in temperament. These two eccentrics quite unmindful of the psychology of the subjects handled the helm of the state in such a tactless manner that they managed to lead it soon into a terrible whirl pool. Astobhujā—the Goswami of the Moamarla Vaisnavas—who had 8,00,000 disciples under his command was insulted; and Raghava, the Moran Chief was whipped, by the tactless Barbarua for their alleged disrespect of him. This raised the flame that had been secretly burning amongst the insulted Vaisnavas, and the princes whose claims to the throne had been thrown out by court intrigues, into a huge conflagration.

At Lakshmi Singha's command, his court poet Dharmadatta Sarmah composed a Sanskrit drama—*Dharmodaya*—in which he ruthlessly painted the Moamarlas as an immoral batch of rascals. This attempt at a permanent record of blackmail of a community specially at the instance of a prime minister who was wellknown for his touchiness could hardly be silently tolerated by the Moamarlas.

The Moamarla Goswami invited each of his disciples to present him with a clod of earth at his Satra near Jorhat, and the 8,00,000 lumps of earth collected together assumed the form of a hillock which stands even to this day—(known as Barbhetl) and this at once filled the hearts of the uneducated villagers with high hopes of the strength of unity. The Moran leader who had never forgotten the cruel humiliation meted out to his race by the Ahoms when they first came to this country, was spurred on to a ruthless vow at this fresh insult and joined the powerful Goswami with his followers. The disappointed prince—Brajnath—the son of Rajeswar Singha was made a show, and the infuriated anarchists roused the mass to a spirit of revolution by crying the slogan—“Rise up, Oh crushed peasants! you will be protected by Saptabhujā, Astabhujā and Chaturbhujā. Retaliate upon the King with his own sword, and shoot him with his own gun.”

During the reign of Rajeswar Singha, whatever discontent had been brewing secretly in this respect, could not make much head-way owing to the extraordinary tact of that King. Rajeswar Singha took the Mohanta of Dihing-Silikatol, into confidence, and through him managed to get information about all secret arrangements made by his cousin the Moamarla Mohanta, and took action accordingly to suppress the movement. Apart from this, Rajeswar Singha contracted friendship with Joy Singha (1760-1799), the king of Manipur by marrying the latter's daughter Kuranganayani. The princess was accompanied by a retinue of sturdy Manipuris who were allowed to settle in a village near Sibsagar. The King of Manipur, being troubled by the king of Burma paid a visit to Assam. This diplomatic move caused nervousness to a certain extent amongst the anarchists.

But Lakshmi Singha was not equal to his predecessor in tact or diplomacy and his prime minister Kirti Chandra cared more for his dignity than for the safety of the Kingdom.

Sapatbhuja or Gagini Deka, the son of Astabhuja and the grandson of Chaturbhuja the Moamarla Goswami, became the source of moral inspiration ; Raghava, the Moran Chief became the head of the military organisation and Brojanath the disappointed prince became the legal support. The whole affair took the form of a mass movement and thousands of peasants armed with bamboo sticks, wooden bows and spears rushed towards the palace in 1769 A. D.

The royal army had no time to prepare, and even what it could do was insignificant against a seething mass which rushed from all sides without caring for life. The proud, prime minister **Moamarla conquest** Kirti Chandra whose mere word could once pluck out a thousand eyes and a mere glance maim a thousand limbs of his poor subjects was chained hand and foot in the elephant yard. The king and the queen of heavenly origin for the mere glance of whose divine persons, thousands waited for days together in the lawns around the palace, were imprisoned in the Joysagar temple ; and then taken to the palace where by the grimmest irony of fate, they were made to squat on a rough mat while Raghava Moran adorned the velvety throne surrounded by the wife of the disgraced minister and the widows of the previous kings, whom he had taken as partners of his bed, evidently with a view to feed fat the ancient grudge.

But the Moamarla Goswami Astabhuja the main inspiration of the



whole movement would not allow a man like Raghava Moran who was burning with the spirit of mean vengeance to remain on the throne, nor would he allow his own son Saptabhujā to rule the worldly Kingdom. As a compromise, Ramakanta, the son of another Moran Chief was installed on the throne and Raghava acted as the Prime Minister. But dissensions broke out amongst the rank and file and on the new year's day when Bihu dancers were showing their feats before the royal audience in the palace yard, the Manipuri princess Kuranganayani who had been originally married to Rajeswar Singha and had then been inherited by Lakshmi Singha, plunged her sword into the neck of her recent paramour Raghava from the back, and the encouraged party of Bihu dancers joined by others from all sides, at once proclaimed the fall of the new regime. The disgraced King was brought back and reinstated, when he started to retaliate by ordering a collective massacre of the Moran ring leaders.

The root cause of the trouble however, could not be eliminated and during the reign of the next King Gaurinath Singha, a foolish move was started to exterminate the evil by first maiming the probable Ahom claimants to the throne and then by a collective massacre of the Moamarlas and their sympathisers. The latter order was carried out so successfully by a Brahmin general Dhaneswar Kataki, that within a short time, the disciples of the Goswami were reduced to one eighth of their original strength. But repression effected only a temporary lull. The dejected king looked with tearful eyes to the depopulated villages for revenue to feed his soldiers and vainly looked for the food for his brain and mind among the scum who were left behind. The selfish sycophants and foolish flatterers were no solace to him.

But the folly was realised too late. The widows of the massacred Vaisnavas who had fled to the north bank of the Brahmaputra were organised into a volunteer unit by Harihar Sannyasin in his hermitage on the Bandardewa hill, two miles to the north of the present Dikrong Ferry ghat; and they marched against the Ahom king. They were encountered in the Machkhowa field in the north east of Dhakuakhana in the present North Lakhimpur Subdivision, but the disorganised and the discontented Ahom army met with a crushing defeat in the hands of the revengeful women. The enemy advanced and captured the capital. One Haoha was installed on the throne but after three and a half year's reign he was replaced in 1793 A. D. by one Bharat who claimed descent from the ancient

Nāraka dynasty—an ancestry that would appeal to the mass sentiment

Poor Gaurinath fled away first to Nowgong with his life. While his retinue were out in search of food-stuffs in that locality, an ordinary landlord of the place Sindhura Hazarika chased the king with his club and made him run away to Gauhati. A worse fate awaited him in that area as well. A mendicant with a band of fisher men took possession of Gauhat and two enterprising Kalita brothers Hara-datta and Viradatta set up a revolutionary movement in North Gauhati

Catastrophe befell the Ahoms! They had cut themselves off long ago from their original stock of China, the Shan States and of the Hukong Valley; nor had they maintained any communication with the powerful rulers of their stock in the Far East. They had identified themselves heart and soul with the interest of the people of the country of their adoption, they forsook their mother-tongue, forgot their customs, abandoned their religion and even distorted the name of their race; and when the people of the country stood against them on sectarian grounds, they were really helpless.

The talented prime Minister *purnananda Buragohain* struggled hard alone in the troubled waters. His diplomatic efforts could not secure any help from Jainta and Cachar, the scanty help from Manipur was neither here nor there, and his own enterprise in organising a new army with the help of the good people of Doyang and Bosa, between Golaghat and Dimapur, was totally shattered by the famine of 1789 A. D.

There was now, no other alternative but to seek the help of the power in the neighbouring west, and on a pitiful appeal from the prime Minister, a contingent of British soldiers under Capt. *British Help* Welsh came to Assam from Bengal in 1794; and after defeating the Moamarias, re-instated Gaurinath Singha who had so long been trying to regain his strength by the frequent use of the poisonous aphrodisiac, in his new capital at Jorhat.

Purnananda Buragohain was himself a valiant warrior and a great organiser, but was at the same time, a great alienator of the minds of his followers in the matter of appointments, owing either *Purnananda's Plan* to his love for centralisation of power or to the innate suspicion of others on account of the unhappy circumstances. Gaurinath Singha died childless, and one Kamaleswar Singha was installed on the throne by Purnananda without consulting any-body

else Other high offices were given to the members of his family or to his kith and kin and this autocracy and nepotism caused heart burning amongst others Nevertheless Purnananda was a great politician and a diplomat Diplomatic relations were established with neighbouring rulers, the king was induced to visit the powerful Satradhikars personally in their respective head quarters Songs and Dramas of Sankar Deva with beats of drums and cymbals again resounded the Naghars and the royal palace, and the common people were assured of a sense of security by the introduction of the British Army system under the coaching of a permanent band of Sikhs and Rajputs These soldiers encouraged by matrimonial alliances in this country settled and produced a hybridised race of warrior class The capital town at Jorhat was improved, the Bhogdoi channel was excavated past the capital town Kolia Bhoma Barphukan alias Protap Ballabh cleared Gauhati of all anarchist pests by murdering Haradatta and Viradatta But the Sadiya area could not be recovered from the Khamtis and the Dibrugarh area remained under the control of the Morans

Bodaw Paya the king of Burma had heard of the troubles in Assam and he planned a scheme to invade Assam and annex it to his territory at this opportune moment In 1796 **Burmese Plan** when Captain Hiram Cox waited upon the king of Burma, as the British Resident of Rangoon the Burmese King sent to him two Assamese coins and a map painted on cloth to enquire if the Captain had any knowledge of the country Recruitment of soldiers was in brisk progress for invasion of Assam under Bodaw Paya's son, and within a few months time, the Burmese army marched to within a dozen stages of the Capital of Assam Kamaleswar Singha averted the calamity by presenting a princess to the Burmese King who was satisfied and considered the offer to have produced the desired results.

On the death of Kamaleswar Singha in 1810 his younger brother Chandra Kanta Singha a young boy was installed as a mere puppet on the throne by the Buragohain Kolia Bhomra was succeeded by Badan Barphukan of the Dowerah family as the Viceroy at Gauhati This man was a discordant element He was equally power loving and he soon became a virulent critic and a staunch intriguer against the alleged high handedness and nepotism of the prime minister Purnananda made an endeavour to bridge the gulf by marrying the daughter of Badan chandra to his son, but this diplomatic alliance could not heal up the political heart burning At last, the shrewd prime minister

determined to make the situation easier by despatching his adversary to the other world: He conspired well, but the move proved abortive owing to the agility of his faithless daughter-in-law.

Badan Barphukan fled to Calcutta and sought the help of the British. His attempt failed, as the British authorities could not change their friendly alliance so frequently specially with the same family. *Burmese Help* Badan had no other alternative but to look for help from the east. But the parent contry Mukong had been fretting under the Burmese bondage for several centuries and the then queen mother had been appealing for help from her kith and kin in the plains of the Brahmaputra valley to regain the lost power of her race in the ancient home in the Hills. Badan therefore, advanced further east ward via Sylhet, Cachar and Manipur; but instead of going to the land of his own stock in Thailand, stopped midway, and not remembering the natural and inborn enmity of his race with the Mons, picked up friendship with the Burmese King

Nor was the young king Chandra Kanta pleased with the rule of the Buragohain. He soon found himself a mere show-boy in the hands of his minister; and even his favourite queen was not shown the usual courtesy by the Buragohain. He therefore, secretly encouraged Badan Barphukan to get help from outside somehow to oust the autocratic Purnananda. Bagyidaw, the grandson of Bodaw-Paya was now on the throne of Burma. He remembered well the invasion of Assam led by his father a few years back, made abortive by his grand-father who preferred the addition of a princess to his harem to the annexation of the country to his kingdom. He readily took up the proposal and at once despatched an army of 8,000 sturdy Burmans outwardly to help Badan Barphukan but inwardly to carry out the long cherished desire of his family, for action.

Badan Phukan advanced towards Jorhat with the Burmese army supplemented by his own recruits from Mukong, Hukong and Manipur on the way. Old Purnanada's nerves had already been too much strained to bear this fresh and unexpected menace, and after sending an army to counteract the advance of the new enemy, he died of heart-failure in the month of Chaitra (March April) in 1816 A. D.

Purnananda was succeeded by his son Ruchinath Buragohain. But this young man did not have the qualities of his illustrious father. When he saw the Ahom Army partly defeated and partly won over by Badan

Barphukan, he advised the King to run away with him to the safer zone at Gauhati. On the King's refusal, he himself retreated with his family leaving his master in the lurch. But Chandra Kanta was a clever man, and as was expected, he entered into friendly alliance with the Burmese and retained his throne accepting Badan Barphukan as his prime minister. A princess Hema Aideo was presented to the Burmese King.

Badan started misusing his power and Chandra Kanta tactfully got rid of him shortly afterwards by getting him assassinated by the **Badan Barphukan** up country Subadar Rup Singh. All was quiet now, and Chandra Kanta was anxious to get back his old prime minister to start the administration afresh, but Rudhinath quite conscious of his cowardly behaviour and also aware of the King's dealings with the Burmese and Badan could not accept the invitation without a grain of salt. Collecting a party of his own, he marched against his well wisher and erstwhile master - whom his illustrious father had installed on the throne, and driving him out, put one Purandar Singha as his new master on the throne at Jorhat in February, 1818.

On receipt of information of this unnecessary high handedness, the Burmese general Ala Mingi came with a great force and compelled **Burmese Interference** Purandar Singha to run away with his life to Gauhati where he busied himself with collecting a new force by recruitment from Bengal. Chandra Kanta was reinstated by the Burmese, but as the Assamese had proved themselves incapable of peaceful Govt. owing to internal personal differences, he was kept only as a puppet and the Burmese were the actual rulers. Chandra Kanta could not tolerate this degradation and he fled first to Gauhati in 1821 and then to the British territory. There he started raising an independent army to regain his throne. Assam passed under the Burmese rule.

Chandra Kanta and Purandar both started harassing the Burmese independently, and in the spring of 1822, a new Burmese general Mingi **Devastation** Maha Bandula (Tilua) came to Assam with a large reinforcement to put a stop to this recrudescence once for all. Strong in brute force, but miserably poor in brain, this general did not know what was his actual mission, and without taking the trouble of making out who was the friend and who was the foe, he let loose his ruffian soldiers to carry on ruthless pillage, unrestrained rape, inconsiderate murder and cruel incendiarism from one end of the country



Wooden Back Rest



Korpci or Man puri Stool



Gold plated Copper Image of Buddha  
(Bought by Burmese Slight)



Coat of Arms for Assam  
Granted in 1922 Under  
The Seal of the Garter  
Principal King of Arms  
For use on Seals Shields  
Banners Flags etc

to the other. The extreme North-eastern portion under the Moran Chief somehow escaped the ravages owing to the latter's tactful friendship with the Burmese general. The poor helpless Assamese people faced with obliteration invariably succumbed to the Burmese vandalism; some fled away with life and honour into inaccessible jungles while others left the country for safer zones in Rangpur, Koch Behar, Jainta Sylhet, Manipur and Cachar. Within a short time, the land of the golden gardens of the Ahoms was converted into a desert with dots of ravished and finished skeletons. The root cause of this pathetic condition was the duel for power between two Ahom officials Party, politics when carried to excess lead to dangerous ends! Looking back to the ancient history of the country, ancient Kamarupa was once thrown into such a chaotic condition by the over zealous act of a Bengali general in 1130 A D, and now again Assam was thrown into a woe state by the over-zealous sectarian movement of a Bengali Pandit!

Mingi Maha installed one Jogswar as a puppet king and continued in his unchecked vandalism for about a year while he was relieved by a saner general Kadeng Mawgram. This Reconciliation man brought order and discipline amongst his soldiers and tried to pacify the local people by conciliatory treatment. Many Burmese soldiers got local wives either by rape, coercion or inducement and a new race called the Man was created in Assam with Hinayan Buddhism as religion and Assamese as mother tongue.

The Burmese however, had no peace of mind as long as the two fugitive Ahom Princes were at large within the British territory to prepare themselves for fresh attacks; and finding themselves also short of food and supplies in the country which they had foolishly devastated and ruined themselves, started to infiltrate in to the bordering British territories in the west and the east. Failing to make them take any heed of repeated warnings, the British Goyt had to take up the matter in right earnest in March 1824, while a formal war was declared against the Burmese for their aggression. The result was disastrous for the Burmese, and they were completely routed in all centres in Assam by the well disciplined force led by Col Richards; and on the 27th January 1825, while they were faced with annihilation at Sibsagar, a provisional truce was concluded through the intervention of the Buddhist priest Dharmadhar Brahmachari.

In the meantime, the British had attacked the Burmese mainland and finding the position too insecure, the Burmese King had to sign a **Treaty of Yandaboo** treaty at Yandaboo on the 24th February 1826 by the conditions of which, amongst other things he agreed to abstain from all future interference with the principality of Assam and its dependencies and also with the contiguous petty states of Cachar and Jaintia

The Burmese soldiers who could not go back with their wives and children were allowed to remain in this country and ultimately they were made to settle in the Goalpara district at the foot of the Garo Hills where their progeny—the Assamese Mairs still live in several villages from Phulbari to Rambhapara practising the religious observances of their fathers, but maintaining the social customs of their mothers



# Appendix—I.

## THE CHRONOLOGY OF KAMARUPA KINGS



### I. THE NARAKA DYNASTY.

1. Naraka I	C 2200-2169 B. C.
2 23 Naraka II to XXIII	2169-1507 B C
24. Naraka XXIV	1507-1173 B C.
25. Bhagadatta	1473-1447 B. C.
26 Bajradatta	1449 1419 B C
27. Somadatta	1419 1389 B. C.

### II. THE VARMAN DYNASTY.

1. Pushya Varma	C 350-380 A. D.
2. Samudra Varma	350 380
3. Vala Varma	420 440
4. Kalyan Varma	440 450
5. Ganapati Varma	460 480
6. Mahendra Varma	480-500
7. Narayan Varma	500 520
8. Mahabhuti Varma	556-560
10. Sthita Varma	560 580
11. Susthita Varma	580 593
12. Suprasthita Varma	593
13. Bhaskar Varma	593 650
14. Avantī Varma	650 654

### III. THE MLECHH DYNASTY

1. Satasthambha	C 655-675 A. D.
2. Vijaya	675-683
3. Palaka	685-700
4. Kumsra	700-75
5. Vajra Deva	715 730
6. Sree Harsha Deva	730 750
7. Bala Varma I	750 765
8. Pralamba	765 820
9. Harjar Varma	820 835
10. Vanamala Varma	835-860
11. Joymala Varma	860 875
12. Bala Varma II	875 890
13 23 Not known	890-970
21. Tyag Singha	970-985

### IV. THE PALA DYNASTY.

1. Barhma Pala	C. 930-1000 A. D
2. Ratna Pala	1000 1030

3. Indra Pala	1030-1055
4. Gopala	1055-1075
5. Sree Harsha Pala	1075-1090
6. Darma Pala	1090-1115
7. Joy Pala	1115-1125
8. Tinjya Deva	1125-1130

### V. THE VARAHI PALA DYNASTY

(In the Kapili Valley)

1. Viswa Sundar Deva	C 1200 1240
2. Koko Bhadra Deva	1240-1170
3. Suvarna Deva	1270-1300
4. Mihamanicya	1300-1350
5. Padmanabha	1350 1360
6. Subahu (Ruvur)	1360-1365
7. Kasyap	1365-1400

### VI. THE DEVA DYNASTY.

1. Vaidya Deva	C. 11330 1150
2. Rayari Deva	1150-1160
3. Bhaskar Deva	1160-1180
4. Baliava Deva	1180-1200
5. Prithu Deva	1200 1229
6. Suvarna Pal	1229-1232
7. Dyumut Narain	1232-1256
8. Sandhya Rai	1256-1281
9. Sindhu Rai	1281-1305
10. Rupa Rai	1305-1339
11. Singha Dwaja	1339-1340
12. Durlava Narain alias Dharma Pala	1345-1370
13. Tamradwaj Pal	1370-1380
14. So na Pala	1380 1380
15. Krotap Singha alias Mriganka	1382-1407
16. Ari natta Singha	1400-1450
17. Ratna Singha	1440-1480
18. Sutaranka	1480 1490
19. Mriganka	1490-1498
20. Bravanu	1418-1500

## XV THE EASTERN KOCH DYNASTY

1	Raghu Deva	1580 1603
2	Paishit Narain	1603 1616
3	Chandra Narain	
	al as Bijit Narain (Bijn)	1616 1640
4	Jay Narain	1640 1662
5	Matendra Narain	
	(Darrang)	1640

XVI THE MUHAMMEDAN RULERS OF  
KAMRUP

1	Makram Khan	1612 1614
2	Mir Sufi	1614 1616
3	Sheik Kamal	1616 1632
4	Abdus Sefa	1632 1638
5	Nurullah	1638 1656
6	Mir Lutfullah	1656 1658

## XVII THE JAINTIA DYNASTY

1	Urm Rani	
2	Krishak Pator	C 550
3	Hatak	570 600
4	Guhak	600 630
5	Jayanta	630 660
6	Joymatla	
7	Mahabal	
8	Banchatu	
9	Kama Deva	1100 1120
11	Kedareswar Rai (Brahmin)	1120 30
12	Dhameswar Rai	1130 50
13	Kandarpa Rai	1150 70
14	Menk Rai	1170 1193
15	Jayanta Rai	1190 1210
16	Jayantidevi	
17	Bara Gossa	

12	Ban Singha	1660 1669
13	Protap Singha	1669 1678
14	Lakshmi Narain	1678-1694
15	Ram Singha I	1694 1708
16	Joy Narain	1708 1731
17	Bar Gossain II	1731 17 0
18	Chatra Singha	1770 1780
19	Yatra Narain	1780 1785
20	Bjoy Singha	1785 1786
21	Lakshmi Sinaha	1786 1790
22	Ram Singha II	1790 1832
23	Rajendra Singha	
	(@ Indra Singha)	1832 1835

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1	Krishak	550
2	Hatak	570-600
3	Guhak	600 630
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1	Gudak	630 660
2	Sree Hasta	660 690
3	Kitti Pal	690 720
4	6 Unknowr	720 870
7	Bbhruvanta Deva	870 900
8	Nava Girvan	900 930
9	Gakul Deva	930 960
10	Naravan Deva	960 990
11	Kesava Deva	990 1040
12	Kangsa Narain	1040 1060
13	Ishan Deva	1060 1080
14	Prabir Deya	1080 1110
15	Bhoja Vra Deva	1110 1140
16	Kshetra Pal	1140 1170
17	Bahmajit Dharmadhvaj	1170 1200
18	Rajachwaj	1200 1230

XX. THE LAUDA KINGS OF NORTH- WEST SYLHET.		12. Subempha	1488-14
1. Luduk	600 630	13. Supempha	1493-1497
2. Stembuk	620-660	14. Sjtungmung alias Swarga Narain	1497-1539
3. Devadatta	660 630	15. Suklungmung alias Gorgoya Rajah	1539-1552
4. Bhazadatta	690-720	16. Kitora Reja	1552-1603
5. Navarjun	720 750	17. Pratap Singha	1603-1641
6. Madhava	750 780	18. Surampha or Birgoraja	1641-1644
7. Framardan	780 810	19. Sutyinpha or Nariya Raja	1644-1648
8. Arunacheryya (Brahmin)		20. Joyadhwaj Singha	1648-1663
9. Bijoy Manikya	1170-1195 A. D	21. Chakradhwaj Singha	1663-1670
10. R nja Manikya	1195-1225	22. Udayaditya Singha	1670- 673
11. Divya Singha	1400-1435 A. D	23. Ramdhwaj Singha	1673-1675
12. Ramanata Misra	1435-1460	24. Suhung	1675
13. Shonoi Misra	1460-1485	25. Gobar	1675
14. Prapapati Misra	1485-1500	26. Sukinpha	1675-1677
15. Durbar Misra alias Du ban Khan	1500-1525	27. Sudarpha	1677-1679
16. Govinda Singha alias Habib Khan	1525-1540	28. Sulikpha or Lorarajah	1679-1681
17. Bijoy Singha	1540-1565	29. Gadadhar Singha	1681-1686
		30. Rudra Singha	1686-1713
		31. Siba Singha	1714-1744
		32. Prematta Singha	1744-1751
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16. Kaptaha	967	38	Kcbomla	1523
15. Yerangba	984	39	Tangamba	1541
14. Lowamba	1074	40	Cholamba	1544
17. Loulo	1122	41	Muyanga	1661
18. Wyrenba	1150	42	Khaenba	1596
19. angaba	1163	3	Khunjaba	1651
20. Knobirhaba	1195	44	Pakomba	1666
21. Panchaba	1231	45	Chara Runba	1698
22. Hnaba	1242	46	Gabnewaz	
23. Purarhaba	1247		al as Gopal Singha	1709
24. K'omaba	1260	47	A r Shai	1748
25. Mcaariba	1278	48	Gsursham	1753
26. Lanthaba	1302	49	Joy Singha	1760
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29. Tonaba	1355	52	Chauit	1806
30. Tabanba	1359	53	Ma it	
31. Larenba	1364	54	Gambhir Singha	1823 1835
32. Panchanba	1404	55	Chanda Kuti	
33. Nintou Khomba	1432	56	Devendra	1835 1886
34. Kayamba	1467	57	Nar Singha	
35. Kobemba	1507	58	Surachandra	886 1891
36. Lowang Kyamba	1511	59	Kulachandra	
37. Ncazm Proba	1522			

# Appendix—II.

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(ii) Ancient Trade route between China Tibet and Assam (261-64)

(iii) Silk is Ser Serek and dealer in Silk is Kirata (266-67)

2 Life of Heun—T' Sang by Shaman Huri Li edited by S Beal (Kegan Paul Trench Trubner & Co London—1911)

Detail descriptions of the journey to Kamarupa and stay in the court of Bhaskar Varman king of Kamarupa

Siyuki by S Beal—Buddhist Records of Western World Vol II Habit and character of the people of Kamarupa and details of fruits grown in Kamarupa and the moats round the Capital by training the river pp. 195-96

3 The Mother pt III by Robert Briffault

Details of Mother Cult in different parts of the world Fecundity of Earth same as that of women and woman considered suitable vehicle for energising Earth to increase fertility for better crops Special reference to Assam Tribes in page 10-206

4 India and the Pacific World by Dr Kalidas Nag M A, D Litt (Calcutta 1941)

Details about the Austro-Asiatic Negroids Nagas and also cultural History of ancient China from Anthropological and Archaeological view points Many important matters showing influence of Chinese Chao Culture on the Ahoms pp 158-59

China developed Musical instruments etc before 2704 B C page 148

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Vol VII No 3 January-March 1941 pp—335-359 Iranian and Sanskrit by Dr B K Ghosh D Phil D Litt

Nature Gods were Devas and abstract deities distinguished by magical power and potency were Asuras page 337 Animal sacrificing Deva worshippers and Asura worshippers were antagonistic even before Zarathustra (340) Zarathustra energised the Iranian tribes and set them on war path (338) Zarathustra's teaching had a pronounced tendency towards Monotheism though never achieved (341)

Vol VII No 1—July-Sept 1940 pp 57-61 Birth of Gods by B K Ghosh, D Phil Litt

Vedic Aryans came in contact with the Assyrians who had settled in Asia Minor about 2900 B C (58)

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Sha-Jelal and Muhamedan Rulers of early period in Sylhet Contains translation of many stone inscriptions And also translation of Ibone Batutah's tour diary from Delhi to Tibet through Assam mentioning the kingdom of Habung

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(i) Jyotishas—a race of people settled in four different parts of India and were known as Pragyotisha, Utara Jyotisha, Upa-Jyotisha, Uttama Jyotisha (12)

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